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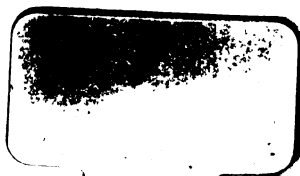
MY LADY GREEN SLEEVES

John V.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF
"THE LADY OF THE SHALLOWS"



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MY LADY GREEN SLEEVES.

MY LADY GREEN SLEEVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"COMIN' THRO' THE EYE," "LAND O' THE LEAL," "CHERRY RIPE!"
"AS HE COMES UP THE STAIR," "THE TOKEN OF
THE SILVER LILY: A POEM."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

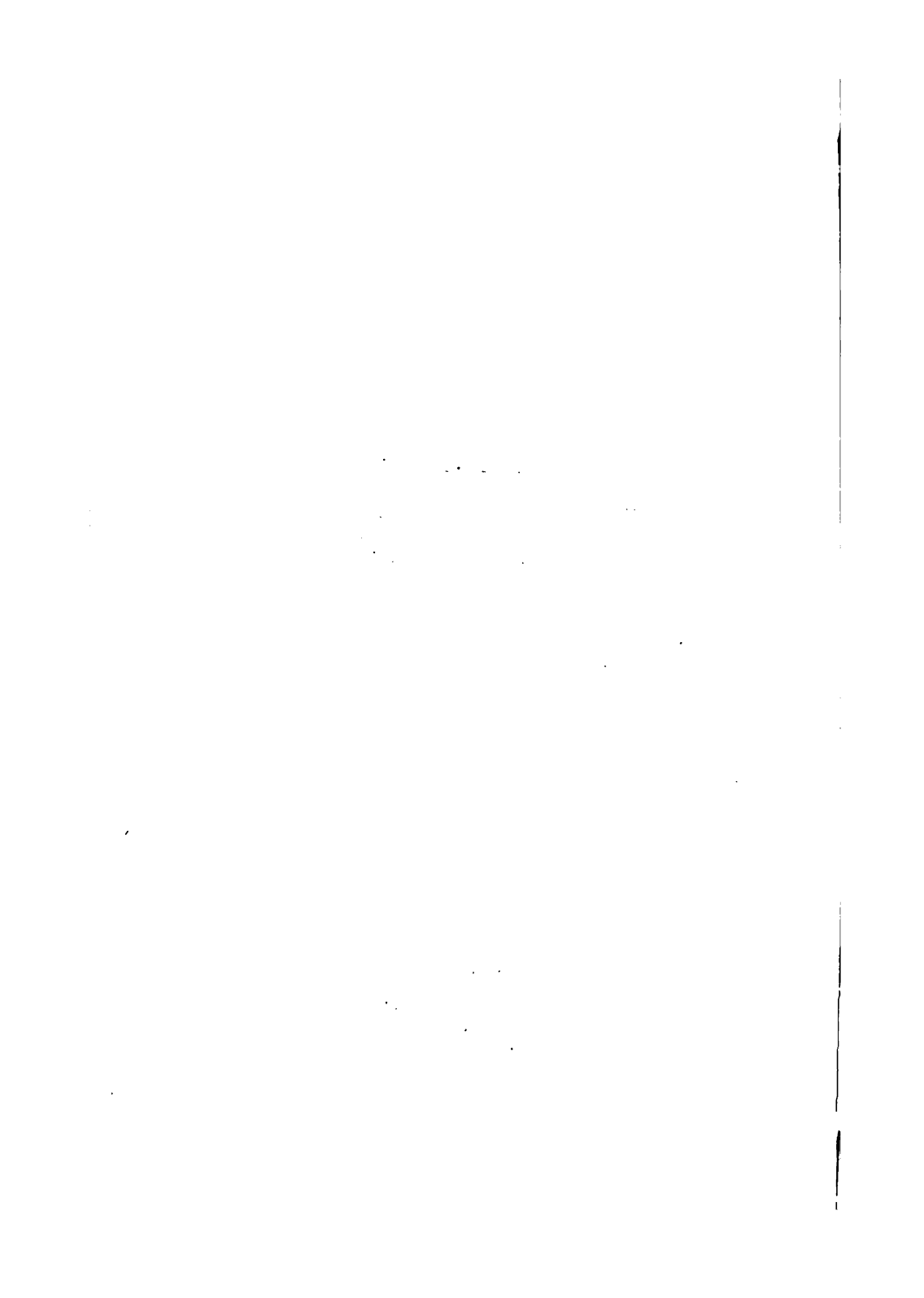
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MY LADY GREEN SLEEVES.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

"A' that Peggie left behind
Was a cot-house and a wee kail yardie;
Now I think she is better by far
Than if she had wed a lowland laddie."



TIME, July ; hour, five o'clock ; scene,
the Park. The season on its last
legs, and the world and his wife
picking up their skirts and scurrying
away like mad, desperately afraid
of being left last at the rout. Where a week

ago horses moved at a foot-pace, they now have room to toss their heads, to step up to their noses, to play their pretty tricks, all in pure sport, as we think; in agony, as the poor beasts who can feel but not speak, know well enough.

It is well that they are dumb, for if the cry of all cruelly-used brute creation could make itself heard, the puny voice of man would pretty quickly be silenced.

A flower-belt of dazzling colour closes in the drive; how different to the wild luxuriance of Sieviking! When it shall have reached its maximum of formal splendour, the fine people for whose benefit it was planted will be gone, we nobodies alone being left to appreciate it.

I wonder if a pair of judges of beauty were planted on either side of Apsley Gate, how many women they would turn back

—how many would be permitted to pass through?

Apparently, beauty does not pay as a profession, for the handsomest women have the worst-appointed chariots, or none at all, while downright ugliness rolls prosperous and easy on its way.

But, whether pretty or plain, I like not the looks of the wives and maids who, lolling on their cushions, pass me by this afternoon.

In these latter days women are permitted too free an agency, and duty to parents or husband, respect to age, with a hundred restraints and traditions recognised by our grandmothers, are swept clean away. Husband and wife, parent and child, meet on equal terms, and the word “obey” is unknown, save in middle-class households, where virtue still flourishes, and the ten commandments are moderately observed. Perhaps the wretched training of women nowa-

days has something to do with their deterioration. How can a girl have a healthy mind in a healthy body when she lives the life of one of yon poor triflers? Richest food and drink, softest observance of the body, the mind ever idle, unbraced, unstrung—absolutely without self-knowledge, her emotions her only law—how can she be expected to arrive at excellence?

Goëthe says, “He who studies his body too much becomes diseased,” and if the lives of the women of the upper classes is not a feeding upon themselves, then what is it?

Take them out of themselves, make them *forget* themselves, pull up the rose-coloured blinds, clear out the lounging chairs, burn the trashy novels, and at the risk of making hoydens of them, set them to emulate their brothers; give them a brisk, fresh, out-door existence, and when you have done all this, the pads, high heels, and paint-boxes will vanish of their

own accord, and we shall have a race of healthy, happy creatures, fitted to adorn the name of wife and mother instead of disgracing it.

This London does not please me, it is hollow and cruel; the wealth and the misery cheek by jowl, the one law for the rich, another for the poor, repel me.

Yesterday I saw a poor starving wretch steal a loaf of bread, and as they roughly dragged him away to gaol, he cried that it was for a sick wife who lay starving at home, with a new-born babe at her dry breast.

Away with him for a hungry thieving hound! Let his wife and child, now that he can no longer work or steal for them, die in their garret!

Make way there for the great man's carriage, and stand aside, and be covered by the dust that flies from his wheels, for is he not

rich and powerful? Does he not build churches, endow hospitals, and entertain the highest in the land?

He has ruined thousands by his speculations; he has thrown off more bubble companies than you can count; he has once or twice narrowly escaped the brand of felon, but the strong arm of the law cannot quite reach him, and he is free to come and go, to hatch his plots, to work his ends. Yet, betwixt that poor starving wretch and this man, think you, will God judge as these earthly judges have done?

Again, cleanliness is next to godliness, says the proverb. Is it? Look at yonder great lady, sweet smelling, fresh as a violet, counting one speck of dirt on her white skin as contamination. You can't look inside her mind, but what is her character, the outcome of that mind?

Just as devoid of one speck of cleanliness as her body is of one speck of dirt, and I protest that the poor drudge toiling along the street beside her grimy mate, who loves and is faithful to him, possessing a sturdy virtue of her own, is ten thousand times sweeter and cleaner in my eyes than the other.

And you, madam, who betray your husband as you list, but at whom society winks, because he still permits you the shelter of his roof, you are rarely described by any harsher term than *galante*, or *tant soit peu coquette*, while for the poor betrayed creature who sins once, and bitterly repents ever after, there is but one word, and that an ugly one.

Extremes meet, the highest and lowest classes touch, and are welded together in their immorality; only the one sins gracefully in purple and fine linen, the other in rags, and in a hovel.

In the month that I have been in town I have kept my eyes and ears open. I have listened, noted, thought, enquired, and the result has been to make me sceptical of the efficacy of virtue, honest endeavour, courage—of all and everything, in short, but audacity, successful vice, and humbug.

“*Dick!*” exclaims a fresh voice with some alarm in it; and, glancing up, I see Hetty and Jill looking as if they had just stepped out of Noah’s Ark.

“What are you doing here?” I say sharply. “I told you on no account to come near the place. At any moment you may run up against Bell or Cynthia——”

“And mayn’t you?” says Hetty pertly. “I s’pose they’d know their own brother when they saw him, wouldn’t they?”

“We have been in Kensington Gardens all the afternoon,” says Jill, “and Hetty per-

suaded me to come on here; she wanted to see what it was like."

"Just for one turn," says Hetty coaxingly. "I knew we couldn't run up against Bell or Cynthia, for they're gone. I borrowed a Court Guide at a bookstall, and saw their names among the departures."

But the Court Guide was wrong. At the very moment Hetty speaks, there comes slowly past us an open barouche, drawn by magnificent greys, with yellow rosebuds at their heads, and behind them sits a beautiful young woman, dressed in white, whose bored blue eyes waken into astonished life as they fall upon—us.

For a moment we stand speechless, then, "Run," I say to the girls, and they do—for their lives.

I follow more slowly, first giving Bell (unseen by her flunkies) a nod, intended to

re-assure her, and am just meditating on the fallibility of the particular paper quoted by Hetty, when I hear the sound of footsteps pattering very fast after mine, and turning, behold my eldest sister, all out of breath and blown with running, her beautiful gown held up in both hands, her cheeks the colour of August poppies.

“Dick!”

“Bell!”

The girls come running back, there are ejaculations, kisses, and, I think, a tear or two; then Bell falls to looking at me reproachfully (but with one eye open to see if anyone is observing us), and dexterously directing our steps to a less frequented part of the Park, asks why we have not been to see her, or even sent our address.

“We are in fine trim for visiting, are we not?” I say, drily, “and your flunkies would

lead you an awful life if they knew you had relations who lived in Picotee-lane."

"And where is that?" says Bell.

"Nowhere that you ever heard of—out Uxbridge-road way. You needn't hold your parasol over your face, Bell, there's no one to see you; and even if you did meet anyone you knew, they'd never suspect you of being our sister."

"You are a very rude boy," says Bell, colouring and tossing her little crocus head; "the girls have spoilt you, I see."

"In my class," I say, with mock dignity, "man is reckoned superior to woman, in yours he is a mere appendage to, and echo of her—leave to me my independence, madam, and I will not fail to pay you the respect due to your rank."

"This is unfair," cries Bell, in a rage. "I have *not* shown myself ashamed of you—I

have tried again and again to find out where you were from Mr. Menzies, but he would not give me your address; he said he was forbidden."

"So he was," I say. "There—there, you can't help being a fine lady, Bell, but never fear that we'll disgrace you. Come to see us, if you please, but don't ask us to go and see you."

"Which is the very thing I was just going to do," says Bell, "but before we begin to talk let us get into the shade"—and there is not much further talk till we find ourselves seated beneath one of those giant trees that would be grand, were its roots not usually infested by some noxious insects that thrive peculiarly well in those parts, and are invariably found in pairs—lovers.

I think we have forgotten how handsome Bell is; or we are so unused to see the beauty

that "goes beautifully" as to hail it with surprise; but certainly since I came to town I seem to have seen no creature so pretty as our Bell.

"This reminds me of Sieviking," she says, meditatively, as she leans, regardless of green smudges, against a tree. "I should have liked to see the dear old place again; but I don't suppose I ever shall now. How was it that old cat, Aunt Theodosia, or that little cock-sparrow, Uncle Golightly, didn't buy it?"

Their talk drifts by me. I do not hear them. . . . I am back again in my lost home. In my ears is the sound, as in my nostrils is the scent of the wind as it plays hide and seek among the gorse-covered slopes. I hear the chatter of the brook as it runs through the big meadow with its border of mock myrtle and agrimony. I search for, and find, the round-

leaved sundew on the boggy bit of ground beyond, and follow the trail of the silver weed, with its flowers soft as velvet, while the blue eye of the flax, widely open, is at her post, watching over the slumbers of my favourite Jack-go-to-bed at noon.

In the garden the balsams rear their prim and stately columns, and the arched doorway leading to the espalier walk is one purple blaze of gorgeous passion flowers.

“If Peter and I were not so poor—so *dreadfully* poor,” Bell is saying, “we would have bought it for you; of course, we never thought of such a thing as its going out of the family. You were so quiet over it all; everything was so hurried.”

“We had no notion of coming down on our brothers-in-law,” I say, shortly; “they provide for two of the family as it is, and I should think they have all their work cut out for them

to do that," I add, with a nod towards her dress.

Bell blushes a little as she glances down at it.

"One must be clothed," she says, "but girls, where, *where* in Heaven's name, did you pick up the extraordinary garments you have on? Antiquated I know we always were at Sieviking; I shudder to think of the gown, considered by poor Mrs. Trevelyan a miracle of taste, in which I stood up to be married to Peter; but *never* did I walk abroad clad in such a thing as *that*!"

"It was too short," says Hetty, apologetically, "so Pink May gave me a flounce off one of her skirts to eke it out."

"What! is Pink May with you?" cries Bell:

"If she were not," I say, "we should be in the workhouse or the streets. She houses, feeds, and clothes us, for as yet not one of us,

strong and able-bodied as we are, have been able to earn a penny that we can call our own."

I am not able to keep the bitterness out of my voice. Would to God mine were that virtue so pleasantly made by Hippias to consist of the entire freedom of man from all and every sort of dependence upon his fellow men!

"I knew that you had become poor," says Bell, in a shocked voice. "We are poor—everybody is poor; but I never for a minute imagined it to be anything like *this*."

She falls to thinking for a minute, twisting between her fingers a sprig of that herb, coral-rooted, shamrock-leaved, beloved of the good Fra Angelico, the wood sorrel.

Finally she pulls out a gossamer handkerchief, whence comes a whiff entrancing as if from the very "Boat of Foolish Smells" itself, and wiping an honest tear or two from her eyes, puts it away again with decision.

"Hetty," she says, solemnly, "if you like to come and live with me, you may. I will dress and find you in pocket money, and though, of course, Woolmer won't like it, as she is used to having all my old dresses, still if she is disagreeable I can get rid of her."

"Don't let Hetty deprive your maid of her perquisites," I say, quickly, "Hetty may go to you on an occasional visit if we can make her decent enough, but as long as we have a crust of bread—aunt's bread—at home, she shall share it."

I take Hetty's hand, but she only blushes, and half pouting, looks away.

"Go then, you pretty trifter," I say, "but do not expect to have lot nor part in our hopes, our ambitions, and our hard won joys. Take her, Bell, and don't make her feel her dependence more than you can help."

"No, no," cries Hetty, cut by my words—

poor Hetty, whose selfishness is neither conscious nor acquired, but constitutional and not to be eradicated—"I do not want to leave you all; but I should like to go to Bell sometimes."

"And what is to be done," says Bell, gravely, "if some man (and I have half-a-dozen of the best *partis* in England coming to Hungerford in September) falls in love with Hetty? When she leaves my house is he to seek her in Picotee Lane?"

"If he doesn't love her well enough to come even there after her," I say, stoutly, "he won't be worth her having at any price. If any one proposes to Hetty, I shall insist on his knowing our circumstances; there shall be no pretences of any sort or description, and only on these conditions will I allow her to stay with either you or Cynthia." Bell groans.

"Don't blame *me* if she marries a curate," she says, resignedly "Well, we leave town the day after to-morrow, and after Goodwood and Cowes, we go to Hungerford, and the sooner Hetty comes the better. Perhaps Jill will come later?"

"We can't spare her," I say, patting her hand; "the house would be all to pieces without Jill; Hetty is the ornamental part of the concern; she always has a cold and takes to her bed when there is anything to be done."

"Jill is certainly *not* in the least like the other girls," says Bell, meditatively.

"We run in sets," says Jill, who has reheeled a sock since we sat down; "half-a-dozen of us are good looking, the other four are plain."

"I think Dick is the handsomest of the lot," says Bell, surveying me critically, "but his hair wants cutting. I wonder why directly a man gets seedy and out at elbows he in-

variably lets his hair grow? I think you might do very well in society, if you held your tongue (of course you can't talk,—very young men never can). Who is it says that to married women and single men are given the keys of society? You ought to marry extremely well, and I daresay you will."

"Heiresses are as plentiful as blackberries in Picotee Lane," I say; "but I don't think of settling down just yet, thanks."

"And, indeed, you boys seem as smart at keeping out of matrimony as the girls at getting into it," she says. "Where are Kit and Will now? I tremble to think of what their wives would be—should they bring any home!"

"They earn the bread they eat," I say, briefly, "which is more than the rest of the boys can say."

"And the twins?"

"Growing and—hungry."

"I don't know what father and mother were about to have such a long family," says Bell, shaking her head, "twins, too—so extravagant. For my part I consider three children *ample*."

"That is what every young married woman says until she has got a dozen about her," I say, slyly. "How is Cynthia?"

"O! very well, but—don't say anything for the world—but she is growing *fat*. Now you know I am plump, but I am *taller*, and it makes all the difference. I dine there to-night, and will tell her I have seen you. Let me see, supposing now——" she reflects a moment.

"Yes, we could manage it, I think. Of course she would like to see you. I will bring her down to Picotee Lane to-morrow morning. We will beg, steal, or borrow a brougham; and

we can settle all about Hetty's clothes, and the rest of it."

"Pray manage so that the flunkies shall not hear of it again," I say; "I tremble for you if they find it out."

"My character is gone already," she says, resignedly. "I left the carriage in the drive; they will think I came here to keep some appointment. Heavens! it is half-past six!" and indeed while we talked the shadows have lengthened, the insects have crept out, and every tree, save the one beneath which we sit, has its vulgar Jack and Joan beneath it.

"Whatever you do," says Bell, as we part with her at the gates; "don't *hint* to Cynthia that she is at all too stout; she hasn't the least idea of it, poor thing, and it would make her *miserable* to be told of it!"

.



CHAPTER II.

"A holy parcel of the fairest dames
That ever turned their—backs—to mortal view."



ICOTEE LANE has every head out of window, and all, forsooth, because a modest one-horsed brougham with two young women inside it, has stopped at the door of No. 7. And when that door flies open, and two girls come flying down the steps to meet the other pair, and all four mingle, and kiss one another, I vow they make a posy of beauty not to be matched in the whole town. They conclude their embraces within doors, and I have observed

that when women, who really like each other, take to hugging, they do it with a heartiness and vigour that leave their favours to men very far behind.

They all retire to the parlour above me, where I hear their voices discoursing at a rate that makes me think pityingly of their unfortunate jaws.

By-and-by these two fine ladies, going over our tiny dwelling with a real curiosity, discover and unearth me, exclaiming at the number and size of the volumes by which I sit surrounded.

They turn them over with the tips of their white fingers, to which diamonds hang like clusters of dew, and sit down involuntarily on nothing in particular when they hear for what profession I am studying.

“A doctor!” says Cynthia, and here I may remark she is one of those people who look

the finest poetry, but live and speak most decided prose ; “ what could possess you to go in for the worst paid, as it is the least thought of, profession ? ”

“ It is a grand profession,” I cry, indignantly ; “ what other can compare with it ? Which is the more noble—the barrister who pleads the cause of a scoundrel and lies this way or that according to his instructions ; the parson who expounds matters he knows nothing about, preaches one gospel and lives another ; the soldier who is paid to kill his fellow-men ; or the man who gives his whole energies to prolonging life, and alleviating human suffering ? ”

“ Bid our gentle Ariel bring bottled beer,” says Anak ; “ methinks after that burst of eloquence our *Æsculapius* must be dry.”

“ I don’t know but what he may succeed, after all,” says Bell, surveying me thought-

fully, "if he learns the art of flirtation in a thoroughly good school, and acquires a distinguished manner. His looks are in his favour, and doctors, now-a-days, are sometimes quite decent people—the habit of regarding them as mere apothecaries is going out of fashion."

"I hope you will not refuse me your patronage," I say, drily; "being such a great person, I shall be happy to attend you, or your cook, for nothing."

"Bell, where are you?" calls Hetty in the distance; and a dress rehearsal being announced upstairs, I am presently left in peace, but not before Cynthia, turning at the door (she is last) has remarked, in a tone of deep feeling, "Such a pity dear Bell is getting so stout!"

My studies once broken in upon, I find it hard work to settle to them again, and go upstairs to the parlour, and, once inside it, make

up my mind that if three women make one market, four women make *two*.

Anak, too, is contributing his quota to the general hurly-burly, as I enter.

"Look at me!"—he is saying, in a tone of disgust, as he slowly revolves before his sisters and Pink May, who, in her best cap and gown, sits mistress of the ceremonies; "John James's coat, Mr. Titmarsh's breeches, Dick's oldest waistcoat, Jill's collar—there isn't a bit of me that I can honestly call my own!"

"I wonder if I could get at some of Ughtred's old clothes without his man finding it out?" says Cynthia, with her head meditatively on one side. "Perhaps I could manage that; but how to get them out of the house?"

"Couldn't you let them down with a rope from an upper window, after dark?" I inquire, sarcastically.

"No," she replies, quite seriously, "because

I am either receiving, or from home ; besides, we leave town to-morrow."

"Keep your old clothes, Cynthia," I say ; "we don't want them. But it seems to me that it is you who are the servants ; the servants who are your masters."

"That is true," says Bell, sighing. "If only we could view them in the same light as the French countess did, who when discovered by an intimate friend having her stays laced by the footman, and remonstrated with on the impropriety, exclaimed, "What! you call that *thing* a man?"

"I have a great mind to take a place as footman," says Anak, looking over his shoulder at his calves. "I should get a whole suit of clothes, at any rate, and plenty to eat. What do you say, Bell, to my accompanying Hetty to Hungerford as man-servant? If any fellow got flirting with Hetty, and didn't propose, I

should be there to bring him to book, you know, and I might come in useful."

"You might," says Bell, laughing, "if the family likeness were not so strong; no one could possibly mistake you for anyone but my brother."

"It is a pity Providence has not arranged things better," I say, gravely; "the prosperous ones should all have been of one pattern, the poor ones of another, so that the latter shouldn't disgrace the former."

"You are a perfect Diogenes," cries Bell, "or do you think severity is becoming to your style of good looks? When I left home, you were a pretty, good-humoured little boy, and now——"

"Adversity is neither handsome nor pleasant," I say, shortly. "Try it for a month, and see how you like it."

"Supposing we try something to eat, in-

stead?" says Jill, taking a coarse, but snowy cloth, out of the settle, and laying it naturally, as one to whom the task is a familiar one.

"It reminds me of the old schoolroom days," says Cynthia, "when we had feasts, and whoever begged or stole the most good things sat at the top of the table, and did the honours."

"It is the same table," says Jill, pausing in her labours, "and " (with a sigh) "I think our appetites are even worse now than they were then."

"But they were very good," cries Cynthia the literal; "I often look back with envy to the time when I could wash a carrot at the pump, eat it raw, and enjoy it."

"When I say worse, I mean *bigger*," says Jill; "the poorer we are, the hungrier we get, and though we have all the most *filling* things

we can think of, we are always more or less hungry."

"And it is a sad thing to be looked upon as a greedy if you have two helps of pudding, or a second helping of butter," says Anak feelingly.

"There's rump steak for dinner!" cry the twins, rushing in, school satchels on back, but stopping short aghast at the sight of our two fine ladies.

"Now what are you going to drink?" says Anak, cutting ruthlessly in; "we have a magnificent cellar — round the corner, so make your choice, ladies, and I'll go and fetch it."

"They can't doctor Bass's ale," says Cynthia. So Bass's ale it is, Anak departing with a two-shilling piece and a fine air of independence, to fetch it.

He is back by the time our Ariel appears

bearing the steak, and we draw in our chairs and sit down to table, as hearty and healthy a company as you could wish to see.

"The best steak I've eaten for years," says Bell, holding up her plate for a second helping, while Anak replenishes her glass, at which Cynthia gives a disapproving shake of the head, that is meant to convey, "Fattening—very," while Bell a minute later goes through the same pantomime on Cynthia's account.

"If only the flunkies could see you," says Anak, with infinite zest, "taking your mustard out of a teacup, and helping yourself to salt with a bone spoon!"

"*And* Sir Peter!" says the Squiffer, taking advantage of Jill's head being turned away to abstract a piece of cheese, while Solomon pounces on a hunk of bread and devours it.

"I can't recollect him a bit," says Anak, applying his eye ruefully to an empty bottle,

“but I fancy he was a sort of refined female in breeches.”

A faint knocking at the door, hitherto disregarded, here becomes more decided.

“Come in!” cries Jill, supposing it to be Ariel; and there enters the very person whom Anak has just so happily (or unhappily) described—Sir Peter Hungerford.

“I found the front door open, so I walked in,” he says, advancing, perfectly dressed, cool, well-bred, but distinctly and unmistakeably *cross*. “Ah! Cynthia, is that you?”

“I told you to come for me at four, and it is scarcely three,” says Bell, colouring a little with surprise, but still with that perfectly easy air of treating her husband as a mere adjunct to her state, that is altogether beyond the reach of any decent, duteous, middle-class wife.

“Pray be seated, Sir Peter,” says Pink May, all of a flutter; and, every chair being occupied, there is a general uprising in his honour, which ends in his being accommodated with the best seat; while Anak, quite unabashed by the certainty that he has been overheard appraising his brother-in-law’s charms, asks that gentleman what he will take.

“Port or sherry?” he says, waving his hand towards a distant cupboard, as though it contained both.

Fortunately Sir Peter does not, like the man in “Ten Thousand a Year,” answer, “Thanks, I prefer both;” he declines all Anak’s offers, who grows more and more magnificent as he finds there is not the slightest chance of their being accepted.

I wonder why one never feels the shortcomings, the *gaucheries* of one’s relations so

keenly as before strangers? Our eyes become slavish, and take the cast of their's; we hear with their ears, angrily and rebelliously, it is true, but still *with* them.

Beholding all with Sir Peter's eyes, our homely room becomes sordid; the disordered table, with its empty dishes, disgusting; and we, ourselves, instead of displaying honest and commendable fortitude in our poverty, seem to have reached that "point of satisfaction in the low and vulgar surroundings that by accident have become ours, when contentment becomes depravity."

Bell, too, suddenly begins to see with his eyes, and, with that instant ranging of herself on the side of her husband, at the expense of her family, that is apt to puzzle any one who has not made a study of the selfishness of human nature, she wonders 'to herself how she could have found rump steak, eaten with

steel fork, delicious ; and bottled beer, out of a cracked tumbler, a drink for the gods.

Her fine lady airs creep out and sun themselves ; Cynthia follows suit, and we are transported to a world of polite society that we have not hitherto entered.

I don't think Anak's shot at Sir Peter was a happy one. There is a sense in his glances not to be belied by the langour of his air, and, without seeming to observe us, I am aware that not one absurdity, or roughness of our appearance and manners, escapes him, though it is only after I have been intently studying him for some little time that I discover him to be just as intently studying me.

I wonder is it Bell's doing or his own that he is here ?

A remark from him on the threshold inclines me to think the latter.

Our married sisters have kissed us affectionately, but with reserve, and gone mincing down the steps, not half so hearty and handsome a pair as came running up them three hours ago.

"If I can be of any service to you, Sieviking, command me," says Sir Peter, giving my hand the grip of a man, not a *petit maître*.

"Thank you, sir," I say, returning it, "my profession is chosen; if I don't succeed in it by my own efforts, I shall then be grateful for your patronage."

"Take care pride is not your ruin," he says, carelessly, and so goes, leaving one bright face only among those clustered about the door—Hetty's.

When they are really gone, she undoubles her pretty fist and shows me what is tightly squeezed up inside it.

“There!” she cries, triumphantly, “Jill and I are going off to Whiteley’s the first thing to-morrow morning to spend it!”

A trip to Whiteley’s, with money in her pocket, is to Hetty as exquisite an enjoyment as “paying away” is to Jill.



CHAPTER III.

"How far this little candle throws its beams,
So shines a good deed in a naughty world."



LETTER!" cries the Squiffer, bursting in, on the morning of Hetty's departure; "and what do you think? It's addressed to *father*."

We gather round it in silence—yes, it is addressed to John Sieviking, Esq., and has been sent on here from our old home; the post-mark is Canadian. It lies on the table before us, no one offering to break the seal, till Jill says, in a low voice:

"Dick, you must open it." And I do.

"What is it?" they cry, as I read on and on, my face lengthening at every word, till by the time I have done, it is almost as long as Pink May's train.

"Would you have thought we could cut it any finer, aunt," I say, addressing her, "either in our clothes or our food?"

"Impossible, dear boy; if it weren't so hot you'd catch your deaths of cold, you wear so little."

"We shall have to wear *less*," I say, dryly, "or take it in turns to remain in bed, for in a few days there will be another body to clothe, and a fresh mouth to feed."

"*Good Lord!*" says Anak. "Then I pity the new mouth and body—that's all."

"What *do* you mean?" cries Jill, picking up the letter; "it can't be one of the boys—they went away *after* poor father died. H'm, h'm

—I remember the name (she looks at the signature); he was father's greatest friend at college."

"He is dead," I say briefly; "he was dying when he wrote that letter—a postscript in another hand says so—and he bequeaths his little daughter to his old friend John Sieviking, praying of him to support her out of his plenty till she is able to earn her own bread."

"Our plenty!" The letter reads like a grim jest. "A second postscript says that she sails by the same ship as brings the letter," says Jill, turning over the page, "and that the captain will see her to her journey's end. Why, Dick! she must be at Sieviking at the present moment."

"I say, she'll be cutting Hetty out with old Menzies," remarks Anak. "Does it say how old she is?"

"Fourteen."

“And her name?”

“Charolais.”

“Do you expect me to do *all* my packing myself?” cries Hetty, putting an indignant head in at the door; whereupon Jill, who is indeed the hard working little beast of a bee from which Hetty, as the Aphides of the species, is wont by blandishment to wheedle its store of honey, vanishes, with the question of the stranger but half discussed.

“We can’t send her back again,” says Anak, “it would cost too much. She shall have half of my grub, and I’ll give up beer; and she can wear Hetty’s old gowns—I daresay she’ll manage somehow.”

“She will have to be educated,” I say, walking up and down; “we shall be bound in honour to do more for her than for ourselves. It’s just another spiteful trick served us by that jade, Fortune.”

“Poor little soul!” says Pink May, “she must be lonely and miserable enough in a strange country. I wonder where she is?”

We are not long left to wonder.

On the morrow a letter comes from Mr. Menzies himself, announcing the arrival at Sieviking of a little young lady, and a big old sea captain. The latter departed again immediately, satisfied with Mr. Menzies’ promise that he would deliver the young lady safely to the heirs of the body of John Sieviking.

For the present the housekeeper has taken charge of her, and Sieviking is quite at her disposal, so long as she is inclined to remain, *après*—will somebody fetch her, or shall he send her properly escorted to town?

“She must be fetched,” decides Jill, “unwelcome though she be, we can’t use her so inhospitably as to let her come alone; but who is to go?”

"I suppose I must," I say, in answer to her anxious glance; and within an hour, for time with me is precious, I am on my road to Sieviking.

I feel as a ghost must who revisits his former haunts, as I alight at the familiar station, and take my way by the short cut, through the woods, to my old home.

Where shall I find this Charolais, in the house with the garrulous old duenna, or counting the apricots on the south wall, or looking through the bars of the old school-room window at the formal courtyard, beyond?

I wander on and on, as in a dream these cool silent glades, these drowsy solitudes, are they indeed but two hours in time from London, as they are the width of a world, in fact, from *me*?

I steel my heart against the beauty around me, it is no longer mine—for I am not of

those who value things only in proportion to their distance from me—and when at length I pause at my favourite seat, the old copper beech, it is more from force of habit than because I expect to take joy in the prospect therefrom.

But I find it occupied already. Some one dressed all in black, with two comical little green sleeves tied on at shoulder and wrist, with ribbons of the same colour, sits in the lap of the mighty old monarch—fast asleep.

Her head is to the bole of the tree, so that the sunlight laces her hair with its golden bodkin, and touching the dark eyelashes, turns to all manner of beautiful colours—a tear!

It must have gathered in her sleep—as I look, it trembles and falls, but no other follows, she only sighs heavily, and the hand that holds the wild flowers on her knee relaxes a little. So this is Charolais. I sit down beside her,

fold my arms, and wait till it shall please her to wake up.

This seat must possess a natural attraction for unhappy people. How else should she have chanced on it? Far out of the ordinary track it lies, and Jill alone knew it to be my favourite haunt.

I wish that she would awaken. This wood that is not mine, yet bates not one of her charms because she is not mine, has no power to delight me now.

What a sad little face it is; yet one more formed for laughter than for tears, surely. How dark the soft rings of hair, how deep the shadow of the dark lashes on the pale young cheek—what slender hands and feet! Why, Hetty at fifteen would have made two of her.

“Poor papa!” she says, in her sleep; “O! poor, *poor* papa!” And that sharp throe of

pain, pushing her hard, though only in dreamland, she wakens suddenly, and seeing me, starts to her feet.

"I—I have been asleep, I think," she says, looking bewildered, and rubbing her brown eyes, "and perhaps you can tell me the way back to Sieviking?"

"I will show you," I say, restoring to her the flowers that have fallen from her lap.

"You know the way?" she says.

"Yes."

She is taller than I had thought. As we go down the glade together, I see that her head reaches midway between my shoulder and elbow.

"It was very stupid of me to come so far, but it was my only chance, for perhaps I shall go away again to-day," she says, sighing.

"You would like to remain?"

"Yes; papa talked to me about it so often,

that I seemed to know the place by heart. "O!" she cries passionately, and stopping short, "what would he say if he knew it was *gone*, that his old friend was *dead*, and that he had sent me over here to be a burden to the children?"

"No, no," I cry, "not that;" for she is trembling from head to foot, and in her brown eyes is a shame that scorches up the tears.

"When papa was dying, I begged, I prayed of him not to send me here. I said I could earn my own bread, and they might not want me; but he made me promise, and I could not choose but come."

We are walking on again now. As I pass each familiar landmark, I seem to be moving in a dream from which I shall presently awaken.

"I don't know why I am telling you all

this," she says, timidly; "but you have a kind face and—and somehow——"

"You have done no harm," I say, gravely. "Lady Green Sleeves, how long will it take you to pack up?"

"O! my sleeves," she says, laughing and looking down; "the old housekeeper said I should get my arms freckled if I went out with them uncovered, so she rummaged out these sleeves—they must have been her great great-grandmother's, must they not?"

"Yes—don't bring them to town with you by mistake, they would make as great a sensation as Anak's knickerbockers."

"Anak!" she stops short, and clasps her hands.

"Why you must be a Sieviking," she cries, joyfully; then her face falls, she colours up with shame. "But I forgot—you can't be glad to see *me*," she says, in a low voice.

"I am glad," I say, taking her two little hands, and kissing her on both cheeks. "To our poor home, such as it is, you are as heartily and truly welcome as if we had been able to welcome you to *this*."

* * * *

"Jill," I say, later in the day, "I have brought you a new sister—My Lady Green Sleeves."

They look at one another for a moment, then Jill's arms close round the slight figure, and henceforth the child's lot is cast in with ours, and the thread of her life, now dull, now bright, is woven in with ours to the very end; but not for many long years do I know the answer to the question I ask myself as I fall asleep to-night, "Is it as a blessing or as a curse that thou comest a stranger to our home, Green Sleeves?" She falls naturally enough into our home life; the little brown head fits

easily into its place at table among the yellow ones. She is oftener sad than merry, yet we laugh oftener, if more gently, than before she came, and are somehow happier.

Anak's uncouth ways, with that broadness of speech which now and then degenerates into sheer vulgarity, insensibly undergo a change; he passes three whole days without trouncing anybody, and, indeed, becomes so desirous of shining in the polite arts of society, that one evening he solemnly attempts to learn dancing.

"If a fellow can jump, he can dance," he says, confidently; and not until he has nearly pounded the ceiling in, and made everybody ill of laughing, is he prevailed on to desist.

But a few days after Charolais comes—and it is the first stroke of good luck we have had since we came to town—he gets employment

in a house of business in the City at the magnificent salary of fifteen shillings per week. Nothing could well be finer than the way in which, at the end of the first week, he hands over to Pink May a ten-shilling piece, as his contribution towards housekeeping, or the magnificent air with which he bestows sixpence a piece on the twins, or the pride with which he informs Green Sleeves that he is going to give her a grand treat the following Sunday—an afternoon in the country.

He walks three miles to his work in the morning, leaving here at six, traversing the same distance at night, usually returning home so dead beat as to be even incapable of eating, his only hunger being sleep.

Often after my long night vigils, on reaching the attic we share between us, I pause to look down on the boyish face, and a pang seizes my heart to see how pale it grows. But not

from me shall fall one word of discouragement; every fierce, well-sustained effort brings us one step nearer to Sieviking; and, with that bitterness of spirit which bids fair to be the ruling *motif* of my life, I find it in my heart to envy the lad his few poor shillings, honestly earned by the sweat of his brow.

For all my daylight toil, my midnight work, what have I to show? Sometimes when the lust of gold, for Sieviking's sake, is on me, and the *feu sacré* burns dim in my soul, I ask myself, "Is not my choice a mistake, and should I not be doing better to adopt some calling, however humble, in which I could be earning my bread, instead of living dependent on others, as for years I must do?"

But one hour at my books soon disperses such thoughts, or, rather, they spur me on to fresh exertions; and, by perseverance, who is a handmaid (while genius is a master, and very

uncertain in his charioteering), I have good hopes of attaining the present object of my desires.

One should not look too far ahead ; one should see what is exactly under one's nose, and pursue it till caught. Give me the scholarship, for which I am now working night and day, and I shall not be long in looking a-field for something else.



CHAPTER IV.

"It fell about the Lammas time,
When flowers were fresh and green,
Lizzie Baillie to Gartartan went
To see her sister Jean."



It is nearly two months since Hetty started off, in all the flush of her high hopes, and youth and beauty, for Hungerford. Tales of her doings filter through to us from Jill, and from these accounts it would appear that she is having a very good time of it generally.

We, too, have had our modest share of good luck, for I have won my scholarship, and some-

thing of that feeling of independence, after which I have lately longed so bitterly, is mine. Anak, too, has got a rise of five shillings a week, so that in his opinion Sieviking is half won.

In these last days of September, that to me are an oasis of rest between the cessation of one toil and the commencement of another, our little home seems to me a very happy one. We have ease of heart, freedom from debt, moderate reward for honest endeavour, love for and trust in one another; and when of evenings the curtains are drawn, and the lamp is lit, one could not wish to see a happier, healthier circle of faces than that which clusters round the old school-room table. Our dear Pink May knits, Jill mends and sews, Green Sleeves gallantly attacks a piece of woolwork destined to cover the sofa with glory when finished (if ever), Anak makes nets, and

the Squiffer and Solomon take it in turns to read aloud to the workers.

But oftener still I take the volume in my hands as I sit in father's old chair by the fire-side, and, with a zest that only recent hard work could give, plunge into that world of fiction which has hitherto been a sealed book to me.

The "Pickwick Papers," "Vanity Fair," "Jane Eyre," "Lorna Doone," the "Mill on the Floss"—these are the books that, told off on the fingers of one hand, will to my life's end constitute to me the whole library of fiction. There is one other book that fascinated me to an extraordinary degree, yet that I should never place in the same rank as the other five—"Paul Ferroll."

This I have read alone—and, obeying I know not what impulse, have locked it safely away where no eye will light on it but mine.

Shall we ever know the story, the real story of Charlotte Brontë's life? It has exercised many minds, and yet it seems to me to be there, in the book; and somewhere Rochester lives, or has lived, no creature of imagination, but a man of thew and sinew, whose portrait has been dashed down in deathless colours by the hand of the woman who loved him. The story was wrung out of her by anguish, among the bleak moorlands, and in the meagre vicarage at Haworth the suffering within her rose to an intense wail that it never could have done had she lived the ordinary life of other women, the life that so surely crushes out genius, and reduces joy and suffering alike to a dead level that never is, or utters, aught but commonplace. Had her love been a happy one, we should never have had "Jane Eyre"—no satisfied, happy woman could have told her story in such words as these . . .

as no woman could have imagined it, for the language of happiness can never touch that of agony. Nervous, intense, the cry leaps straight from the tortured heart, instinct with that terrible craving which is the be-all and end-all of baffled love, for whence comes all suffering on earth but through love in one shape or another ; either through having lost its object or being unable to attain it ? One must have suffered, one must have lived . . . above all, one must be human, and have sounded the whole gamut of earthly passion, nay, one must suffer still, before one is able to stretch out one's hands to touch the heart of the people. More splendid deeds, more deathless songs have been crushed out by happiness than is ever known or guessed . . . happy folks, especially women, rarely come before the world's eye, or express themselves in noble speech or work of any kind ; roughly

speaking, it would be true to say that to be happy, is to be unknown. And yet these lives flowing calmly on as a river between its smiling banks must surely be dimly conscious at the last of a something missed, a something ungrasped that would have made them wiser and more human . . . and may be with the knowledge that happiness is not the chief and only good, and a dull sense of frustration, their existences are merged in the great ocean of eternity. To be happy always . . . not mere vulgar happiness, but the special one coveted . . . not to taste joy in sparse and precious morsels, with fierce interludes of longing and pain, but to dwell with it by night and day, to have it ever at the board—it would crush the genius out of any man or woman who ever lived. Had Byron's feet been alike, should we ever have heard of him? His superb capacity for enjoyment, his pre-eminent fitness for happi-

ness in every form would probably have smothered the genius in him, he would have lived and died not an active worshipper, but a passive one. The anguish of wounded pride stung him into deathless speech, just as privation and adversity have forced into the effort that ends in fame, those who in prosperity had been for ever obscure.

I wonder, is there one song of Burns that was not suggested by what he felt, or heard, or saw? Born of an emotion, an experience, an incident, it sprang living and real from the heart, as something known, not imagined, felt, not guessed, and being flashed down in hot blood, while its divine truth yet thrilled him, lives to us for ever and ever on the page of fame. He was not of those who shut themselves up evolving out of their inner consciousness,

which may or may not be healthy, images, that if brilliant, are also likely to be eccentric and untrue to life, he was out and about, living, enjoying, suffering, observing the manifold phases of life passing before him in quick succession, ever throwing some new light upon his mind.

What are the deeds, the songs, the works that touch us most, bringing the tear to the eye, the throb to the heart—in a word, that make us rejoice in, and proud of, our humanity? Those that have arisen out of a noble impulse, a generous thought, a keen sympathy with the joys and sorrows of mankind—either of these is that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin, and sets us laughing or weeping as the poet bids.

And it seems to me that writing should come, first, from what we experience, and observe in ourselves; secondly, in what we

experience from, and discover in others. A man should be constantly accumulating something so that he may have the wherewithal to draw upon; and when one sees a man who should be at his brain work, idling about, smiling at a flower, standing still in the street to watch any one of those chance sights that, to the understanding eye, form an idyll or a tragedy, be sure that this man is enriching heart and brain, laying in a stock that he will draw upon later. To him all things are precious, and in the commonest, most vulgar surroundings he will discover a ray of humour and beauty—in a word, he will learn something.

I wonder no one has ever defined genius as the faculty of acute observation, with the two-fold combination of an exquisite susceptibility to truthful impressions, and the power of uttering the same, whether in deed, work, or

speech, magnificently. For to one man is given feeling, the power of a subtle and perfect appreciation of truth, that makes his mind a crystal mirror to reflect every shape and form of beauty, but, at the same time, is denied to him the gift of expression ; and while his life is a dumb poem, a sublime worship of his Creator (has not Plato said, "the good justly comes to be identified with God himself?") he is to those around him a clod, who utters naught, because he has naught to utter, but that he would speak, yet cannot. The mighty soul, bound in fleshly withies, travails inarticulately, or else struggles not at all, content *to be*, and, ceasing, leaves no trace. Yet who shall say that somewhere the store of beauty, to which he has silently added, is not the better for this humble existence that, in life and death alike, rises as an exhalation to its Maker ?

Above him may there not be written—

“He is made one with Nature; there is heard
His voice in all her music—from the moan
Of thunder to the voice of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in night, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn that being to its own. . . .
He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely.”

Although of one whose powers of expression were exquisite as his perception of the beautiful, who in early youth achieved immortality, yet died broken-hearted, not knowing that he had won it, were these words written; yet I often think that the man who feels it all, the pathos, the beauty, the poetry of nature, yet never utters his delight, is he who worships and understands his Maker best.

I have seen a man stand before a picture, its beauty sinking into his soul as rain into moss, understanding it to the inmost fibre of his

nature, yet no more capable of expressing his delight in it than he was of painting it. I have seen another to whom has been vouchsafed the gift (at best a tawdry one) of picturesque language pause before that same picture, and, without understanding or appreciating it one whit, turn aside to criticise it in such language as commanded every man's attention.

Take a third man, a keen observer, who has the nicest faculty of judgment, and the capacity of penetrating into and distinguishing between the differences of all things within his reach. But ten to one if this faculty of observation alone, wrought to its highest perfection, do not subordinate to it his appreciation of the beautiful, so that his speech, caustic, witty, and pregnant, may yet lack that touch of human nature which finds an echo in our hearts.

Thus one man feels, but cannot express,

another expresses, but cannot feel ; a third observes, but expresses half of the truth only. It is the triple combination that makes a man that vehicle of communication between the higher and lower ranks of intellect that we call genius.

I rouse myself with an effort—what is this ? Daylight, clear and pure as when it rises over Sieviking woods, is lighting yonder windows ; for the rest, the room is in darkness, yet, when I ceased to read, not more, methought, than a few moments ago, the lamp was burning still, and the clock had just done striking one. I must have been dreaming for hours. Adieu, pale dreams ! To-day, this first of October, the real business of my life begins ; and the struggle I have so steadfastly sworn shall end in Sieviking and honour, commences.



CHAPTER V.

"There were three ladies in a ha',
Fine flowers i' the valley ;
There came three knights among them a',
Wi' the red, green, and the yellow."



WITH the first December snow and rain comes Hetty, all rosy and blooming, a mere bundle of furs and velvets, yet contriving to look the softest, most beautiful thing imaginable, as she hugs us in turn, and vows she is rejoiced to be home again.

I suspect there is some hidden cause for this gay, good humour ; that some little fount of

sweetness within turns all to sunshine without, and I look keenly at her left hand, when by-and-by she comes to my side with all her fine trappings laid aside.

She catches my glance and shakes her head (we are alone), blushing a little, then says

“ But he’s coming.”

“ Here ? ”

She nods—and Jove himself could not surpass the consequence of that nod.

“ Brave Hetty,” I say, patting her shoulder; “ and now tell me how it all happened.”

“ He is an elder son,” says Hetty, gravely; “ but he is plain Mister—Bell was furious because I would not accept a horrid, little old Duke, much older than Mr. Menzies, and without any teeth.”

“ That must have been a great sacrifice on your part,” I say; “ but perhaps this one has none either.”

“He is very good looking,” she cries, firing up; “but do you know (she drops her voice) I feel sure he thinks me a perfect little lump of stupidity and vanity, yet can’t help liking me—*isn’t it odd?*”

“Very—if your body had not happened to be so much better than your soul. But I’m beginning to have hopes of you, Hetty.”

“I told him,” says Hetty, “and Bell cried with rage when I told her I had done it, that we were very poor people; that we lived at the wrong end of London; that I had taken in the bread with my own hands; and that I had a brother in a *warehouse*; and when he asked where we lived I told him *Picottee Lane*, and he took out his pocket-book and wrote it down.”

“And when did he ask you to be his wife, Hetty?”

“He has never asked me that,” she says,

hanging down her yellow head; "he has not even told me that he loves me, but I know it—he kept all other men away, and gave me no chance of liking anyone else."

"Hetty," I say, suddenly, "do you love this man?"

I find no answer in her blue eyes, the eyes that should be so much more earnest and beautiful than when she went away, they are shallow and sweet as ever; and I wish with all my heart I could see how—

"In her soul a grace hath reigned"

that might turn our pretty butterfly into a woman worthy of an honest man's love.

"And how—well, how respectable you are looking, Dick!" she says quickly, as Anak comes in.

"Doesn't he?" says the latter, looking at me with beaming pride; "and all of his own earnings, too—he saved eighty pounds out of the

hundred John James gave him for his fees, by getting the scholarship, and when he sent it back the old boy refused to take it—said Dick had earned it—so Dick's a Cræsus, and we've all got clothes now that were *made* for us."

"And Dick cuts up bodies—*real* bodies," says the Squiffer, with relish; "and people have to stand in a row while he looks down their throats. He's going to take *me* round the wards with him one day; won't it be fine?"

"I'm not afraid of what I should *see*," says Solomon, deliberately; "but I won't go there, especially when there are bodies about, for fear something might happen."

"You're afraid," says the Squiffer, contemptuously; "*I* ain't."

"I'm not," says Solomon; "but I read in a book, the other day, that the galvanic process was once tested upon the body of a man who had been hanged for murdering his wife.

Well, when it was applied first to the face, the corpse's jaw began to quiver, the muscles were fearfully contorted, and one eye actually opened. Presently the right hand was raised and clenched, the legs and thighs began to move, and everyone present thought he was on the point of being restored to life."

"Well," says Anak, "and what of that? It frightened 'em a bit, I 'spose, I think it would me; but what harm could the poor beggar do anybody if he was dead?"

"But he did," says Solomon, in a sepulchral voice. "When the right hand was raised in the way I told you of, it struck one of the men standing by, who died *that very afternoon* of the shock."

"Don't talk such a pack of rubbish," I say, rousing myself from thoughts of Hetty and Hetty's lover; "come, are we to have any tea to-night

The round table is all the brighter for our pretty girl. For a few days the house is gay with her laughter and happy voice; but when a week has gone by she begins to droop, she starts at every sound, and into her eyes comes that look of anxious listening that is never seen where a woman's course of true love is running smooth.

"I told you so," writes Bell about this time. "How could you expect to see any more of a man who knew you lived in *Picotée Lane*? And he is likely to be even a better match than the Duke, for through the death of his cousin, last week, he is now heir presumptive to the marquissate of D——. You chose to be guided by a school-boy's advice instead of mine, and now you see the consequences."

"I am not sorry I told him, though," says Hetty with unconscious worldliness, "because I am certain that if he ever found me out

deceiving him in the least thing, he would never marry me."

"If he is worth his salt he will come," I say; "it is a poor love that is dependent on circumstances and surroundings. If the name of Picotee Lane has frightened him away, you are well rid of him."

But I have little leisure for Hetty's love troubles; work, hard by day, harder still by night, absorbs me entirely. Often I do not go to bed at all; but when at morning I open my study door, I never fail to find Green Sleeves, with cup and platter beside her, containing the food that I have not felt the lack of till I see it.

Green Sleeves!—little heart!—I do not think that in these days we fully realise how much of the peace and happiness of our little home is due to thy bright and gentle presence.

One Sunday, hard on Christmas, we are all, save Hetty, eating our roast beef with

appetite, when there comes a double knock, not a loud, but a firm one, at our modest front door.

"Gilly," I say, pausing in the act of carving Anak's third helping, "he said he'd come and see us some Sunday. You girls had better let me see if he's too screwed to see ladies, before you come into the other room."

"I'll open the door to him," says Anak, who has not previously seen him, and whose invariable method it is to keep people waiting on the doorstep while he exhaustively (and sometimes audibly) scans them through the letter-box slit.

"Open the door gently," I say, as he sets off, "because perhaps Gilly will come in head foremost"—instructions that Anak improves upon by a more lengthened application than usual of one eye to the slit, and so very

gradual an opening of the door that he is himself only visible to the visitor by instalments.

"You can come in, Mr. Gilly," he says, in a patronizing tone, on discovering him still to retain the perpendicular, and he shuts the door and stalks noisily before him into the parlour. "Dick rather expected you to-day,—he'll be in directly—but perhaps you're hungry, and would like a slice of beef? No offence, you know—but I don't 'spose you get roast beef every day; no more do we."

But "Mr. Gilly," who is known not to be ashamed of his poverty, "has lunched."

"You'll have something to drink, then," says Anak, generously, and rattling the money in his pocket (all this I hear subsequently). "I got my wages at the warehouse last night, you know; and there's a pub. round the corner."

But Mr. Gilly is understood to say he is not thirsty.

“Ah! had too much last night, perhaps,” says Anak. (There is nothing like knowing another man has a vice that you yourself have not, for breeding a fine contempt of him.) “When I’ve done dinner I’ll fetch you some soda water—though I will say this for you, that you don’t *look* like a person who gets tight every night—when he can afford the luxury.”

Mr. Gilly here bursts out into a laugh that re-assures Anak, who is beginning to think that there is considerably more starch in Gilly’s disposition and linen than he should have expected from my description of him.

“Ha! ha! ha!” goes Anak, “how we have roared, to be sure, over your lighting yourself to bed with the cheese, and shutting up the cupboard with the lighted candle inside it, where Dick found it when he came home!”

“Ha! ha! ha!” goes Mr. Gilly, convulsed with mirth.

“And the time when a student came to borrow a shilling of you, and you were as hard up as he was, and had popped everything but what you stood up in, so you took out your false teeth and got five shillings on the gold setting—every penny of which you gave him.”

Mr. Gilly is understood to repudiate the noble deed of charity ascribed to him.

“You must have looked awfully queer without ‘em,” says Anak, “being your four front ones—though ‘pon my word they look so real that I should never have known they were false. Well, I must go and finish my dinner. Dick’ll be in directly. Here’s an album if you’d like to look at it.”

Mr. Gilly opens it, and exclaims,—

“Ah!—Hetty?”

“Miss Hetty, if you please,” says Anak,

from the door with great hauteur. "My sisters are not used to being called by their Christian names out of their own family."

And his manner is still majestic when he rejoins us.

I don't know what possesses Hetty, who has been changing colour ever since Anak left the room, to jump up as he re-enters it, as if about to ask a question ; but never heeding her, he goes straight to his dinner, and she sits down again.

"I wish Gilly wouldn't come at such awkward times," he says, in a grumbling voice ; "especially if he isn't hungry—and he won't have anything to drink either. He's not a bit like what you sketched him, Dick—he's as decent looking as you are—and decenter."

"He must have come into a fortune since yesterday, then—for he was worse than ever when I saw him at hospital."

“He doesn’t know his manners towards ladies,” says Anak, scowling; “he had the impudence to call Hetty, *Hetty*, so I took him down a peg or two.”

“Why, Gilly!” I say, entering the parlour a minute later, stopping short, however, as I discover the man who occupies it to be no “Gilly,” but an utter stranger.

“I am Ullathorne,” he says, advancing, “and you are Sieviking?”

As we grip hands, the feeling that prevails with me is less one of surprise than of wonder. How came such a man as this to fall in love with our Hetty? For, though he is young, not more than half-a-dozen years my senior, there is that in his face which marks him out from the ordinary men of his class; not only is there as much sense as birth in his face, but he looks as if he took life in earnest, and could, on occasion, think.

"I seem to know you quite well, Sieviking; I've heard so much of you," he says, abruptly. "Your brother says I mayn't call your sister, *Hetty*. What do you say?"

"Do you love her?" I say, as abruptly as he.

"Yes. I should have been here weeks ago, but for my father's illness."

"You see our circumstances," I continue, in the same tone; "they are not likely to be better for many years, if ever. What will your family say to your seeking a wife in such a place as this?"

"I have only two relatives—my father and uncle—and they are both, like Barkis, willing."

"And you love her?" I persist.

"Why not? She is sweet tempered, obedient, truthful——"

When a man has to argue his reasons for loving a woman, be sure that he is as anxious

to convince himself as his hearer ; at every word Ullathorne speaks I feel more and more convinced that he no more loves Hetty with all the force of which he is capable, than she possesses the power of understanding such love did she inspire it.

“And beautiful,” I add, dryly. “Are you sure that her whole attraction for you does not lie in her beauty—a quality which should be looked for only after certain other essentials in a wife ?”

He turns suddenly.

“You think we are unsuited to each other ?”

“So far as I can judge in the few moments I have seen you—yes.”

“Sieviking,” he says, after he has taken a few turns up and down the room, “I wont affect to misunderstand you—but, beyond a certain point, is not your honesty a wrong to your sister? I expected a great deal of you, but not [such

disinterestedness as this, for you have not known me long enough to have conceived a friendship for me?"

I do not immediately answer him, for I could not tell him, even if I would, how something stronger even than the love of a brother for a sister has within the past few moments stirred within me; how in this man before me I seem to see the realisation of that dream of "My ain friend," that I have long ago given up expecting to find, least of all in Hetty's husband.

"I like you," I say curtly. "I think this marriage would be a mistake. I love Hetty dearly, but she would never satisfy you—you are best apart. Her tears for you will be quickly dried by another lover."

Tactless idiot that I am, a hero even could not bear to imagine himself supplanted; it is the one vulnerable point in Achilles' heel, if

Achilles stand to represent mankind, by a wound in which he is invariably overthrown.

And, alas ! Hetty's lovely face smiling up at Ullathorne from the open page that his ill-luck has planted hard by, serves to complete his disgrace in the eyes of one who, never having experienced the follies of love (or that hotness of the blood mis-named love), profoundly despises them.

"I told her that I should come," he says, involuntarily. "What would she think if I did not ?"

"I will take care that she knows the truth," I answer, some inward force compelling me, against my will, to make one last effort to stay him. Surely this is one of those occasions when our good angel gives voice through us, and seeks to avert the calamities that in our blindness we would bring down upon our heads ?

Not for many a long day—not until bitter estrangement has crept in 'twixt me and thee, my man-friend, my Jonathan, whose soul, knit unto mine in this first hour of meeting, is loosed but by the cold hand of Death itself—do I know how if this day I might have prevailed with thee, much of the misery of the future might yet have been averted.

But he does not heed me, he is listening to a step without.

“Can’t I see my little girl?” he asks with the impatience of a man who, having decided against his better judgment, desires no time left him for thought.

“I will send her to you”—and I go in search of Hetty. She is alone in the little back parlour staring out at the driving sleet and snow, and my heart smites me for the part I have been acting towards her, as I see how pale she is, but wounded vanity.

will sometimes pale a woman's cheek as effectually as a wounded heart.

"Hetty," I say, sitting down beside her, "there is somebody in the other room who would like to see you."

"Yes," I know, she says listlessly, "Mr. Gilly."

"No—not Mr. Gilly."

She turns swiftly, such a rosy light of incredulous delight on her face as makes me think she loves him well enough to give some hope for their happiness yet.

"Dick—*him*?"

"Yes."

"When I heard the knock, I thought it was—I wanted to call out to Anak not to go, but I could not, and when he came back and said it was *Mr. Gilly*, I could have cried."

"He is a good fellow, Hetty," I say, patting her head; "try and deserve him if you can. And now had not you better go to him?"

"There is no hurry," says Hetty, demurely, who, like every other average woman, will cry her eyes out for, or be prepared to run a mile to meet her lover if he does not come, yet when he is safely within her reach, will not fail to keep him waiting.

"Such coquetry may do for some men, but it won't do for him," I say, sternly. "If you are going, go this minute, or I'll tell him you don't want him."

She goes instantly, without even a glance at the looking-glass. Alas! poor Hetty! You want a firm hand, a hand with a touch of the brute in it, which Ullathorne's has not, to make a decent woman of you.

"A woman, a spaniel, a walnut tree,
The more you beat 'em the better they be."

There is more of sound truth, less of ruffianism, in the homely old proverb than the world now-a-days guesses.



CHAPTER VI.

“Up then spak the Queen o’ Fairies,
Out o’ a bush o’ rye;
She’s ta’en away the bonniest knight
In a’ my companie.”



OVERS are queer creatures, eh, Green
Sleeves?” And Green Sleeves shakes
her brown head wisely, and answers,
“Very.”

We are sitting in the back parlour looking
out at the close folded green buds of the
cherry tree within which the white flowers
are swelling;—by the time they shall have
burst their sheaths and spread themselves to
the sun, it will be Hetty’s wedding day.

We can hear the murmur of voices on the other side of the thin wall, but presently they will cease, for conversation, save when of a strictly personal character, is apt to languish between the sweethearts. Ten to one but in a few minutes Ullathorne will come in, and sitting down by Green Sleeves, commence one of those passages at arms with her of which he never seems to weary, and in which he is as often overthrown as victorious.

To draw her out, to rouse and provoke her into an argument, to play on her moods, his mind seeming to flash on, or borrow from hers lights so rare and beautiful that I listen sometimes in admiration and wonder, this is his delight, and one that on his every visit here he rarely forgoes.

These children with their instincts, how they set the trained intelligence of manhood at fault; they hit truth in the bull's-eye, and

know not their own power; and thoughts profound and inspired fall from their lips as though God himself spoke through them.

These two, a whole lifetime of years between them, influence each other in an extraordinary manner. Apart, neither is at his best; together, one seems the complement of the other, and to call into being all that is noblest and most brilliant in either.

Since Green Sleeves came to us, she being my constant companion, I have been able to teach her much; but all the knowledge she has acquired has lain dormant till Ullathorne's bright intelligence vivifies and brings it to light, as the colours that lurk unseen in a flower till called forth by the rays of the sun.

Beautiful Hetty, standing by, and meditating on her wedding gown, listens sometimes with a dull sense of wonder, in which no faintest ray of comprehension mingles.

Hetty for wife, Green Sleeves for companion, Dick for friend ; in these days I think Ullathorne desires no more. He is happy ; he feels no lack in Hetty, since there are others close by to supply the need ; and yet—and yet—it is with a growing sense of future trouble that I see the days go by which elapse before the words are spoken that make Ullathorne and Hetty one. I said to the child yesterday,—

“Green Sleeves, how is it that you are not bright, and witty, and clever with me, as you are with Mr. Ullathorne ? Is it that you take less trouble to please me ?”

She looked at me for a moment, then said,—

“*He* is Ullathorne ; *you* are Mr. Dick.”

Somehow I understood by that, how she meant that people who love each other don't talk clever, or even have the most enlivening

effect upon each other; they are content just to breathe, exist, be happy together; the perfect independence necessary for the free play of the intellect is almost incompatible with that trembling dependence upon another for happiness that may be characterised as the very essence of love.

And I felt relieved; for lately, knowing how prone very young girls are to worship not knowing what they worship, and with an intensity of feeling to which in future years they will look back in wonder, I have had some fears for her.

And so the days go by; different ones, these, to those thoughtless, ignorant ones at Sieviking, where we lived the lives of unthinking animals, and indulged in that recklessness of mirth that is almost as conducive to deterioration of character as a sullen, revengeful discontent. The preparations for the

marriage are simple enough; they would have been very different had I consented to the wish of Ullathorne's father that the wedding should take place from the house that he never leaves. The sisters, too, would have had her married from one or other of their houses, and Hetty was nothing loth; but when—Ullathorne and I both thinking alike on the point—these offers were refused also, Hetty acquiesced, merely skimping her wedding gown to make ampler the travelling dress that would at least be seen on her arrival at Y——.

And so it falls that one morning, the pure white blossoms of the cherry-tree looking in at the open window reflect themselves in the bridal attire of the pretty creature who stands within, an hour old wife, by her husband's side.

But on Ullathorne's face is no joy, only a look

of doubt, of awakening; there is something terrible to me in the eyes that leave Hetty's lovely face to seek a childish one hard by, a revelation of what the possibilities might have been, of what the realities *are*, that make me fear for the future of more lives than one.

Involuntarily as from a peril, I snatch the child's hand and draw her back, but his gaze has left her; it is bent on Hetty, as though in that beautiful, uncomprehending, happy face he desperately sought safety. Ah, me! that a man's hopes should be ventured on aught so frail! Even with Anak, as master of the ceremonies, there is little mirth; indeed, he has never got over the shock caused by his mistaking Ullathorne for Gilly; it is a relief when all is over, the farewells made, and Hetty, in her delicate dress, is descending the steps, already enfolded in the honour of her husband's name and position, the past life of

poverty cast behind her easily as a worn-out glove—I could have better hopes of her future did she less eagerly and lightly enter on it.

It might be Bell or Cynthia who enters with such grace the splendid carriage, but it is Ullathorne's very self who turns back at the last moment to wring the hands, to look hard in the face of my Lady Green Sleeves. And now they are off, Anak at the very moment of their departure tying on unperceived a favour to the back of the chariot, so that smiles, and may be a good wish or two, will follow them all along the road.



CHAPTER VII.

"Shyning was the painted ha',
Wi' gladsum torches bricht,
Full twenty gowden dames sat there,
And ilk ane by a knicht;
Wi' music cheer,
To please the ear,
When bewtie pleased the sight."



HE season is in full swing; the Hungerfords, Longleats, Ullathornes, a perfect colony of our fine relations congregate at one end of the town, while we paupers grub on in the blessed content that must surely have something low in it at the other.

Unobserved, I sometimes stand in a rare

fit of idleness at the railings in the Park with the other *canaille*, and hear opinions expressed with a rich flavour and a truth that they can't expect to hear in aristocratic circles, passed in turn on my three sisters, as on their hacks in the morning, or carriages in the afternoon, they pass in review before this most critical section of the British public.

I gather from these enlightened individuals that Bell is a fine figure of a woman, though in her case that solidity of proportion which usually stands sponsor for steadiness of morals is not to be trusted, as other cavaliers than Sir Peter are usually to be seen at her bridle-rein. On Cynthia much the same judgment is passed, while Hetty is pronounced very pretty, but "bored-like and m'appen she'd look more lively if she'd got somebody else's husband alongside of her."

But I also enjoy the honour of seeing my

sisters—especially Hetty—in their own houses occasionally. It was with some doubt, and not a little of condescension that the latter, as on one of her rare visits home she came fluttering one day into my den, invited me to dinner, being most particular to impress upon me that I need not be in the least uneasy or afraid, as half the people I should meet were very stupid indeed, and if I only held my tongue I should pass muster with anybody.

“My poor girl,” I said, her being grown so very fine a lady in these few short weeks, relieving me of any fear of giving her pain, “I never was one of those people who feel big in a small house, and crushed in a great one, and I am glad to find that you are so equal to your changed estate. If I should come I promise to observe your deportment narrowly, and to be guided by it, while as to such trifling breaches of good breeding as eating with my

knife, or making a quotation that nobody understands, why you know I am never guilty of such."

"You are very unkind," says Hetty, with tears in her eyes. "You know I did not mean that I was ashamed of you, and no one ever scolds me like this, not even Ullathorne."

"I suppose not," I say drily, "and prosperity, and having everything your own way, is bad for you, Miss Hetty. I don't know any worse training for a young woman who wants keeping in order than to get married—unless she marries her master; and though I think you've done that, and yet a woman of fashion has fifty ways of eluding her husband's eye, and I've even known the mere possession of a fine establishment to develop a silly pride and vain glory in weak minds."

"I won't bear it," cries Hetty, starting up, her flushed face the only bit of colour about

her, she being in white as usual, as I think all women should be so long as they are handsome and young.

“Then be true to your better self,” I say, sternly; “is it by fine lady airs such as these that you think to win and keep Ullathorne, whose heart is of gold?”

“To win him?” she says, her colour paling; “and have I not won him—why else did he marry me?”

“Hetty,” I say, drawing her towards me, “have you ever thought of how you must try and live up to Ullathorne, not expect him to live down to you?”

“We are quite happy together,” she says, turning her head aside; “we never disagree. No two people could get on better. What more can you—does he—want?”

“Has he never told you, Hetty?” I say, sadly.

“He talks to me sometimes like you do, but I do not understand him ; I never could understand clever people—we are happy, that is enough for me.”

Alas! poor Hetty, if she feels no lack, how is it to be supplied? But, thank God! she is happy, and, as I know, the fault is not all on her side.

“You will come then, Dick? You must not be vexed with Ullathorne for not coming down here ; but he is so busy always.”

“I know, but I see him most days ; he comes to me at hospital.”

“He never told me that. I do believe,” she adds, half bitterly, “that he’s fonder of you than he is of me! Well, good-bye ; I shall expect you.”

“Hetty, you’ve forgotten something ; ever since you were married you’ve forgotten it.”

“What is that?”

“To ask Pink May to your house.”

“O! Dick! Think of it, her cap, her heels, her train!”

“I won’t have her slighted. Who kept us all from starvation, who is feeding and housing us now but that dear, good, loving soul? Go and ask her for the same evening you’ve asked me, and then I’ll think about coming.”

“The servants will all laugh, Dick; it really is impossible.”

“Then so is my going to you. There, run along, I’ve wasted enough time already.”

“If you’ll promise that she doesn’t wear a blue, or a pink, or a scarlet cap——”

“I’ll promise nothing. If she wore three, one a-top of the other, I’d not be ashamed of her; and I’d give any flunkey who laughed at her a sound thrashing.”

Hesitation, sulks. By and bye a rustling of departing skirts above stairs, my behest done,

and presently, God bless thee, thou simple soul ! a comical little figure seats itself at my elbow, and gravely takes me in council concerning the superior merits of blue over orange, and pink over magenta.

I abandon science for millinery. I forbid all colours, and am proof against her petitions even with tears for a little pink. It is a subdued, and even elegant Pink May that a few evenings later enters Hetty's drawing-room on my arm.

I begin to understand Hetty's temporary intoxication better as she advances to meet us with Ullathorne at her side, passing down through the splendid rooms with as haughty a step as if she had never trod any other.

I am one of those who love that

"Beauty should go beautifully,"

but it seems to me that the luxury and magnificence beyond limit that surrounds the

upper-class women of the present day must infallibly embellish the body at the expense or the utter extinction of the soul.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, with everything to feed all three—what wonder that one's duty to one's neighbour, the whole pith and marrow, I take it, of all religions, neglected as unacted lies, while the life of every average man and woman is one profound, sinful adoration of self?

"Why, Dick!" says a gay voice behind me, and, turning, I see Bell, blooming and handsome as ever. "So you will come to Hetty, when you won't come to me? I felt sure you wouldn't be awkward—I declare you look quite natural in your clothes!"

"I hired them for a week, and have been going out as waiter every evening to give myself assurance," I say, drily.

"As cross as ever," she says, laughing,

"and fortunately as handsome. I don't despair of your distinguishing yourself yet—by marriage, of course—there's no other royal road to wealth that I know of. I have *views* for you—dinner, thank Heaven! and that little horror, Lord Cosmo, is my fate; but Hetty's cook is good, so it might be worse—for instance, good company and a bad dinner."

"Florizel," says Hetty's voice close by, allow me to introduce to you my brother"—and that is all, so I make up my mind that the young lady who is presently walking down stairs on my arm is one of those unfortunates to whom her parents have been more kind than Providence, and who cannot hope to get the better of circumstance until she takes to herself a husband.

"What an insignificant atom one feels in a house like this," she says, as we enter the dining-room, whose walls are peopled by

pictures dim as Rembrandt's, the king of shadows.

"Yes; the people here remind me of what Empedocles said of the Agrigentines, 'that they built as if they were to live for ever, and feasted as if they were to die to-morrow.'"

My place at table is not far from Ullathorne's; he looks across at me with a smile as we sit down. We have met before to-day, but in very different company to what we are in to-night—and yet we must all come to that by which he and I stood this morning.

"You are great friends, are you not?" says my companion.

"Yes."

I am hunting for Pink May, and find her at last, wedged in between an old buck and a young divine, and with an air of being equally happy with either that is certain to command attention from both.

I turn to find my companion's eyes fixed upon me with such earnestness as to convince me that I am no stranger to her by hearsay, if by acquaintance.

"Well?" I say, smiling.

"There!" she says. "So you *can* smile—I was just wondering if by any possibility you could."

"Do I look so bad-tempered?"

"No—but austere as a St. Augustine. I think I should like to look like that—sometimes; it would make my occasional good humour so precious. Who was it said that the genialities of a stern man are as effective as the asperities of an amiable one?"

"I think, Miss Florizel," I say, "that you and I scarcely start on equal ground. You evidently know something of me—probably to my disadvantage—while of you I know no

more than that you are named after one of Shakespeare's heroines."

"I won't deny it," she says, returning my keen gaze steadily; "I *have* heard of you often from Hetty—and Ullathorne."

"Then," I say, gravely, "you are aware that this is my first evening out, that I have been studying the book of dinner etiquette (kindly sent me by one of my sisters, with certain passages in it *marked*) for over a week, and that I am dreadfully afraid of opening my mouth, lest something should tumble out quite unfitted for polite society. Now, supposing you tell me who some of the people are, while I study their manners?"

"And so lay bare to you my own character!" she says, slyly; "however, for my own sake I'll try not to be too spiteful."

"Then you will be dull—a woman is never so epigrammatic as when she is dissecting her

friends' characters. Indeed, one who talks like poor Poll at ordinary times becomes positively brilliant under the influence of malice—do you deny it?"

"No; but malice is not always responsible for the pungent things said at another person's expense. Remember that by praising the absent you usually offend, and never amuse; and to amuse, if she is not beautiful, is a woman's first duty in society."

"To be sure," I say, drily; "that is just my notion of them when they happen to be neither wives, sisters, nor daughters. But to continue——"

"You shall not put me out of countenance," cries Florizel. "Confess, now, that you can't go on for ever and ever saying how clever, or good, or charming some particular person is—the subject becomes dull, is quickly exhausted; but what a wide field opens out to your wit

(and what is wit, as Lord Lytton asks, but truth made amusing?) animation, and powers of sarcasm in attacking his weaknesses and follies! What vigour of expression is yours, what a warmth of imagination, since for one-half that you know, you must surmise the other, till after half an hour's warm abuse you are in such a glow as almost to love the abused person for the pleasure he has afforded you in abusing him."

She pauses, out of breath and laughing.

"It is very bad," she says, gravely, "but it is human nature. In the same way we always hear of the misfortunes and failures of our friends; but it is a very long while before the story of their successes reaches us. We smile over a bad review of our dearest friend's new book, but somehow the paper with the favourable notice gets mislaid on its way to our hands."

"Are you not very bitter for so young a woman?" I say, looking at her keenly.

"Perhaps," she says, turning her head aside, but not before I have seen how in her face is less a look of disappointment than of that want which one sees so often in women whose lives utterly fail to satisfy their souls. I glance round the table. Ullathorne is in a brown study. Hetty, at the opposite end, leans back as she converses with her neighbour; already she has acquired that exquisite air of boredom without which it is impossible to be a real fine lady. And to think that she once stole small-clothes, and clothed herself in the proceeds! I wish the Chancellor were by to see her now.

If I came here to see husband and wife together, to glean some hint of their conduct and relations to each other, I am doomed to disappointment. I see only how easy it is in a

life such as this for the tie between husband and wife to be a slack one, and no one be the wiser, scarcely even themselves.

Bell is eating her dinner with a magnificent contempt for consequences in the shape of fat, that compels my admiration. Sir Peter is studying his *ménu* as if it were the Book of Fate. Pink May is bridling and coquetting to her heart's content, and, in a pause of the conversation, is overheard relating the oft-told tale of the delicacy of her complexion when a young girl.

A little pompous man opposite, sitting next to a lady who looks as if her enemies had been shooting roses at her with pop-guns, fixes my attention; evidently some one in his own estimation, I am anxious to know what position he holds in the eyes of others.

"That is Lord Beaudésert," says Florizel, when appealed to. "His one object in life is

to pass for a wit and *raconteur* of the first order. His stories are usually good ones, of which he is himself the hero; and in telling them he invariably gives as the things that he *did* say, those that he *ought* to have said. I think Gil Blas must have had him in his mind when he described a man "whose wit shone at the expense of his memory." I often feel tempted to cry out at one of his stories, 'An old sixty!' as people did in Philip of Macedon's time, when anything borrowed was passed off as original."

"They managed things better in Rome," I say, laughing, "where the citizens used to take out their slaves to evening parties to jest for them, and, at every shout of laughter provoked by them, assumed an air of modesty, as if they had said all the good things themselves—it must have saved them a lot of trouble."

"But rather hard lines on the jesters, or flies, as Plautus called them; for they were soundly beaten if they failed to amuse, and got their pates cracked if they didn't crack jokes to their owners' liking."

"All that is to be altered, soon," I say, seriously, "and the laziest people will shine by no exertion of their own, according to the state of things imagined by a certain ingenious and scientific poet, in which we consist of an *internal* body and an *external* soul."

"There would, in most cases, be more within than without," says Florizel; "but about laughter—I envy anyone who has the power of making others laugh. It is a great gift. Rabelais remarks, that the wearers of crown and sceptre are born under the same constellation as the wearers of cap and bells."

"And who gave you Rabelais to read?" I say, quietly.

“Women read of their own accord, sometimes, I assure you,” she says, demurely, “and even—think. Now, do you know that, except to you, I should not have dared to make one single remark that I have made to-night? I should be voted pedantic, insufferable; one never *talks*, you know, in polite society.”

“You would deserve to be punished, if you did. Is it not Lucian who, after relating how a mob ill-treated a certain philosopher for attacking their superstitions, adds, ‘And very justly; for what right had he to be wise among so many mad men?’”

“Let us talk nonsense,” she says, abruptly; “let us be spiteful. You see that old-young lady next but one to Lady Hungerford? Well, ten years ago, she worked her wedding veil of Honiton lace, but no one has ever given her the opportunity of wearing it yet.”

"She should go to Galway Fair."

"What do they do there?" asks Florizel, curiously.

"It is just like the London market of young women for marriage, only that over there they manage it in an honest, straightforward manner. When fair-time comes round, the lasses dress themselves in their best, and, their avowed purpose being matrimony, go through their paces before the assembled lads, who critically survey them, and make their choice, or not, as they feel disposed. Miss Florizel," I add abruptly, "is this dinner going on *for ever*?"

"Console yourself—it is three parts over."

"But for you," I say, bluntly, "I could not have sat here one-half of the time I have done already."

And, indeed, as I look around, the table, the dishes, the people, the whole scene, combine to stifle and oppress me. . . . involun-

tarily I recal the tale of how Buddha, when perplexed and troubled by that ceaseless striving after light that gave him no rest, one night awoke to find his apartment full of the dancing girls who had sought to soothe him to slumber. Some of them lay tossing heavily in their sleep, some with open mouths, others coiled up in uncouth shapes; it seemed to him as if his apartment was full of loathsome bodies, and that all was vanity. And, rising up, he caused his fleetest horse to be saddled, and rode away from the palace that was to him but a tainted temple of the flesh, and to which he never returned.

What a life to live—to eat, drink, sleep, and to-morrow—to die?" Not a bit of it, to begin all over again, as if the body, not the soul, survived.

"What a happy looking couple," I say, glancing with a sense of relief at two fresh

young faces at a little distance. "Are they going to be married?"

"Yes—don't they remind you a little of Artemus Ward's 'And have I found you at larst, O! at larst?' and the answer, 'Yes, marm, but if you had come at fust you would have found me sooner?' But I believe he really is fond of her—I have a conclusive reason for thinking so."

"And that is?"

"Don't laugh, but he was in love—deeply, every one thought, with a lovely young woman, who was plump almost to a fault. All at once he forsook her for little Lady Bell, who is slight also to a fault. Now, the fascination must be extraordinary that detaches a man from a fat woman to a lean one—*ergo*, he must be really in love with Lady Bell, don't you see?"

But her last words remain suspended in the

air like a big note of interrogation—they do not please me. Without knowing what women should say, I am instinctively aware of what they should not.

“Mr. Sieviking,” says a soft voice presently—a voice that seems to have a blush in it, and turning I see Florizel’s countenance painted with that which is to a woman’s face what a rainbow is to the sky.

“It is not your fault,” I say, thinking aloud, “it is the pestilential air you breathe. But why should you care for my good opinion, Miss Florizel?”

“I do care,” she says; and the intensity of her voice startles me. “If there were more men like you, girls would be different——”

“Miss Florizel,” I say, abruptly, “I will tell you a secret. I have for some time been in danger of becoming a prig; a little encouragement from you, or any one else who feeds my

vanity will about finish the business. If you look up to me I must shun your society, for nothing in the world but being in the company of people every way my superior can cure my complaint."

"Then you must not approach me in the drawing-room, presently," she says, laughing, as she rises and follows Hetty out, leaving me to the enjoyment of company that (with the exception of Ullathorne) is by no means an improvement on that which has just left me.

Odd, irregular, attractive, Florizel's face comes between me and my ears as I sit by Ullathorne's side drinking my claret.

"I should think you and Florizel must be *starving*," says Bell, an hour later, in the drawing-room. "I did not see either of you eat a mouthful during the whole of dinner; you were talking at such a rate. But, seriously," she adds, dropping her voice, "I'm delighted that you

got on so well together—it is just as brilliant a chance of settling yourself in life as any one of us girls ever have had. Her father, the old earl, adores her ; she is the only child, and her fortune will be immense ; and, as I always told you, Dick, you are a very good-looking fellow, and when you have mastered one or two minor points of etiquette that I will presently tell you of, I see no reason why you should not be good enough for anybody.”



CHAPTER VIII.

“Hey, ninnie, nonnie! But love be bonnie
A little while, while it is new;
But when it's auld, it grows more cauld,
And fades awa' like morning dew.”



TIME flies; it seems yesterday that Hetty was married, yet I went to-day to see her as she lay on her white couch with another tiny Hetty on her arm, and returning home I noticed with wonder that the old cherry-tree was again in bloom.

As she held the little creature against her breast I wondered if beneath all its frivolities a mother's heart was beating there, and

thought I traced in her beautiful face something of that solemn, wistful look that motherhood they say always brings—as though the Divine breath, kindling the young life, had in passing touched the mother also, and made her sacred.

I looked at Ullathorne, too, as he stood beside them; there was something new, hopeful in his face—hitherto I could not but blame him, for did he try, with all his heart and soul did he try, to make the best of that mistake in life which with eyes wide open he had committed?

I left them, trusting that those baby hands might yet bring the hearts of father and mother together, but alas! with returning health the old Hetty arises, the little child, gift of God, like any soulless toy, is laid aside. The old frown comes back to Ullathorne's brow, the weariness to his voice. If nowadays,

not knowing, I should chance to meet him, I should esteem him as neither more nor less than one of those idlers upon whom the waste of life is regretted by none more keenly than himself.

He has never crossed our threshold since his marriage day, but we are constantly together, the love between us growing deeper and deeper, nothing broken by the secret that lies between us, till sometimes I say to myself, conscience-stricken, that it is small marvel he has so little to give to Hetty.

If only they would disagree sometimes—but there are no contests between them. There is simply a total lack of appreciation on her part, an incapacity on his to move or reach her, that completely stultify any notion of warfare. Bell and Cynthia observe nothing amiss; I should soon hear of it if they did, for I see them often enough, they having taken me in

hand, and stood sponsor for me, so to speak, at the fount of fashion.

They have given up tormenting me on the subject of marriage, being satisfied in the belief that my heart has accompanied Florizel to Cannes, whither she went three months ago with the old man, as the sole remaining chance of extending his life a few years.

And time goes on, and lo! one fine day a white petal flutters down on the dusty page from which I am reading, and I look up to discover how Nature through the cherry-tree gives warning of another dead and gone year. And what have I gained in it? A profound knowledge of my own ignorance—what is knowledge but the consciousness of ignorance—the germ of the feeling of Michael Angelo with his go-cart, and the motto “Still I learn?”

I have not amassed one penny; I am not one step nearer Sieviking. I falter and stumble

sometimes on the path, so rough is it, so devoid of hope and encouragement.

But for the happy home life, and the mark it leaves upon me (I think one can mostly tell by a man's face the character of his nearest and dearest—he is their reflection; as they make him, so is he, ill-humoured or noble, false or true), I should be in danger of becoming that most disagreeable of all spectacles, a man ill at ease with himself and his Maker, a state of things usually brought about by his own misconduct—or his misfortunes, which are equally damning.

I love my work, but I would see some substantial reward for it; and in this I degrade Science, since he only can study it truly who does so for pure love of it.

There is one gap in our home circle. Six months ago Anak left us to join the Natal Mounted Police, and prodigious epistles in his

best round-hand reach us from time to time with accounts of his doings; while to one private and particular fight, in which he signally defeated a bully of the name of Bill, he devotes four whole pages of sanguinary details.

I found Jill crying over one of these letters the other day. She has made up her mind that her boy will never come back, and would start off to Zulu-land if she dared, in search of him. I laughed at, and comforted her, not knowing how in a day yet to be born the nation's heart would quiver through and through with anguish for her slain children; how from end to end the world should heave with a great throb of horror, shame, and pity, while from every eye should rain down unbidden such tears of blood as hitherto no reverse of war, however severe, had caused to flow!

Thank God that my poor Jill, as she kisses and lays aside her boy's letter, cannot read the future.

That she will see him once again ere that terrible, never-to-be-forgotten morning, when at a thousand peaceful, happy breakfast tables, from the carelessly unfolded paper, will leap out the death-news that shall strike to the heart how many a sister, wife, and mother! When, with desperate eyes, that sickeningly seek that which she fears to find, far down on the ghastly list she will see the name of Sieviking.

Some one was to blunder, and our Anak, and such as he, were to pay the penalty with their lives . . . and how nobly, how grandly, that penalty was to be paid, the page of history should tell to all time.


Page most shameful, most bitter, most glorious in England's history, so long as hearts

can beat and eyes can weep, shall ye be remembered, and over the graves of your heroes need no flowers be planted, no monuments raised, for in the hearts of the nation will their names live for ever and ever.

Poor Anak . . . Jill will cry night and day—as though one who died such a death as he, could be reckoned poor . . . in life, we called thee good, brave and strong, Anak, but no one ever called thee poor . . . and now, maybe thou art rich, Anak, not poor, beyond aught that thou ever wast on earth!

But I am projecting my story many years. We are happy yet. Our numbers are unbroken, and even threaten to be added to, as Kit, in a recent letter, talks of coming home.

Solomon and the Squiffer grow apace, and have turned to such good advantage the schooling that by painful economy we have contrived



to give them, as to well fit either to take a clerkship shortly—when he can get it.

John James pays us periodical visits; he takes the most intense interest in my progress, and is firmly convinced that some day he will have occasion to take pride in it also.

And Pink May, God bless her! is the same as ever. She wears a little more pink in her caps, perhaps, and any trifling improvement in our circumstances is always visible in an increased length of tail.

She has had a proposal, too, from our landlord, who was much displeased at her refusal. He had no idea, he said, that poor people could be so proud.

And Aunt Theodosia is a widow still, and has been heard to say, in an unguarded moment, that Mr. Titmarsh had treated her abominably.

That gentleman is travelling with Marshall on the Continent in search of health. We see

his name in the paper from time to time as guest to persons of the very highest consideration, and Pink May has been observed surreptitiously cutting out these announcements, and in the depths of her soul is (we think) firmly convinced that his admiration for herself caused his indifference to Aunt Theodosia's charms.

But we are of opinion that for the present his pockets are too comfortably lined with our money to make it necessary to saddle himself with an old wife.



CHAPTER IX.

"A flower in the dew,
Sweet was its smell and bonnie was its hue,
And the longer it blossomed, the sweeter it grew,
For the lily in the bud will be bonnier yet."



LLATHORNE!"

"Dick!"

I start up in amazement from my work to see before me one whom I believed to be pleasantly engaged in shooting his own coverts at the present moment.

As we grip hands, his eyes fall on Green Sleeves, who had been sitting by me as I worked, and who has now risen and stands before him.

If the past year has brought little change to

me, it has brought much to my Lady Green Sleeves, who is a child no longer, nor yet a woman, but just a young thing with the innocence of the one, and the budding promise of the other, and I don't think that on God's earth you could find a prettier, more moving sight than this; pure, fresh, unworn, with its innocent lips that have tasted neither of fierce pain nor fiercer joy, and its future a blank page upon which will be written just what the man she shall love pleases, no one sure could see such an one and not breathe a hope for her happiness.

"Why, Green Sleeves!" I cry, "have you forgotten your old friend, Ullathorne?"

But it is more as strangers than old friends that they meet, and when she has gone away, Ullathorne's face, pale even to haggardness, fixes my attention.

"Anything wrong, old fellow? Hetty—the child?"

"Quite well—Hetty gay as ever," he says, absently.

"But what on earth brings you to town in September and with a houseful of people?"

"The Hungerfords are there—Sir Peter will take my place. I've come up to town, Dick, about *you*."

"Has Hetty found a new heiress for me? or do you mean to try once more to inveigle me down for the shooting?"

"Neither—we've given up both notions long ago. It's something practicable this time. Dick, would you like to earn five thousand pounds?" His question strikes my ears like a thunder-clap. Five thousand pounds—a third of the price of Sieviking—is he mad, or am I dreaming? Humanly speaking, I cannot hope to have saved that sum after a score of years of toil and struggle. . . .

“You jest,” I say, turning aside. “What I should like, is not what I can do. You are trying to help me in some way, Ullathorne, but I said my last word to you on that subject long ago.”

“I said ‘earn,’ Dick—but listen. A lad, heir to vast possessions, has fallen into bad hands; the only chance of saving him is to get him out of the country, and keep him there for four or five years, or till he has acquired sense. The father came to me yesterday in despair—did I know of anyone who, at almost a moment’s notice, would take charge of him—some one not too old, or the lad would break away to other companionship, but steady, firm—in short, old fellow, *yourself*, of whom, of course, I instantly thought. He offers a thousand a year, and your expenses.”

“Let me think,” I say, walking up and down, “my second year at St. Saviour’s is

just up—that's lucky, but these five years abroad, except for information irregularly acquired, will be so much dead loss, and throw me back five years in the profession. On my return, I shall have to enter as a third-year's man—but five years of work would never bring me five thousand pounds. Thank you Ullathorne, with all my soul, and, *yes*."

"There's not much time to lose. I must telegraph to the old man at once, can you start the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"You'll see Florizel abroad?"

"I suppose so."

There is a pause, in which Green Sleeve's laugh sounds overhead.

"I want to say something to you, old fellow, and I don't know how."

"Say it out," I cry, throwing my arm over his shoulder; "we've been friends too long to

begin quarrelling now." (O! my friend, my ain friend, who to-day art more to me than all other men and women upon earth, why didst thou send me from thee to come back to thee as I departed, never again ?)

"Sieviking," he says, "you've kept so straight up to the present time, been so completely master of yourself, that my warning will very likely sound like presumption, especially as, though I am your elder, you have always led me, not I you."

"No, no," I cry, breaking in; "it is I who have looked up to you. The benefits have been all on my side; you have given all, and taken nothing——"

"Dick," he says, abruptly, "there is only one unselfish aspect in my love for you—it is in sending you away, for the best part of my life goes with you."

Alas! that I should leave him to the influ-

ence that, stronger than mine, is to fill his life, as later one will arise over me, compared with which his is as nothing; that never again, all in all to each other, shall we two stand as we stand to-day. . . .

“What is this mighty business that you are trying to get off your mind?” I say, turning aside. “Are you afraid I’m not steady enough to take charge of the lad? Come yourself and take care of the pair of us!”

“I’m not thinking of him, but of you. Dick, have you ever noticed how a man, who has gone straight as a die, whether to hounds or through life, up to a certain point, all at once comes a fearful cropper, that he never gets over to the end of his days?”

“I have seen it,” I say, slowly, “but speaking of life—I should not call it a fall—that implies something unexpected; the man’s whole life and training led up to the moment

of the temptation, whatever it might be, and the result was perfectly easy and natural, long foreseen of himself, if not by others. "Tell me," I add half jestingly, "what do you fear for me?"

"That with all your fine, even splendid, chances of life, Dick, you'll make some crowning mistake in it—as I did," he adds, below his breath.

"And the cause of the mistake?"

"A woman. Who else?"

"Why, old fellow," I say, staring at him, "my heart has never beat the faster for a woman yet—I never think of one in any shape or form ——"

"Dick," he says, quietly; "what women have you seen yet, save those of your own family—and Florizel?"

"I have *seen* plenty—but as to coming under their influence—that's another matter. How is a woman to become so dangerous to me?"

"Either through your loving her too much or too little."

"Some special woman, of course?"

"No; the special one is she whom you must marry. Widely different women would be equally fatal to you—a good woman even might make your misery as completely as a bad one."

"Then I vow I'll never fall in love at all," I say, carelessly; "warn me against avarice, bitterness of spirit, pride—but against woman! It's a sheer waste of breath."

"Would you consider a man to be in the full possession of his faculties when one-half of them slept, Dick?"

"If those that are awake suffice him for use, why should he desire the rest?"

"That would be to exist, not live—and though hitherto yours has been the life of an ascetic, there will come a time when your passions, as

yet a sealed book to you, will rise and sweep all before them—and with the woman who calls them forth in all their gigantic strength will rest the happiness or the failure of your life——”

“Ullathorne,” I cry, startled; “what is this?—what has put such ideas into your head?”

“I don’t know,” he says, passing his hand across his forehead; “you had an instinct for me once—I seem to have the same for you now. I dread your falling under one of two influences abroad—either under Florizel’s, which will never satisfy you, being purely intellectual, or a new one, compared with which the former will be as child’s play, and which comes to most men once in a life time—and I have a strong reason for dreading both.”

“And that is?”

“Because I see in the far-off future, happiness for you in a union in which your nature

will be satisfied through and through—if nothing come between now and then to make it impossible.”

“My profession is my wife, Ullathorne, as Sieviking is my sweetheart.”

“Stay, Dick—a word more. There is one other way in which you may come to grief—through the very nobility and thoroughness of your nature.”

“Noble — thorough —” I cry, laughing bitterly; “how little after all these years you know me! Some day perhaps your character and mine may come to be tested by each other, and you will see how infinitely grander, finer—pshaw! we are bandying compliments, as though we were enemies. After all, you may be right, and I *shall* come to hopeless grief—but it will be no fall, friend, mind that.”

“Dick, do you ever look at yourself in the glass?”

"Once a day."

"What do you see there?"

"A fool—as Seneca said when he looked in his."

"I see something very different—that I never saw in a man's yet unless his life was to be out of the common way—not a look of doom, but a foreshadowing of something intense—whether of joy or sorrow God alone knows!"

"I lost my careless look of youth and happiness when I lost Sieviking," I say, abruptly; "it changed my whole nature—*hardened* me. But Fate wreaked all her spite upon me in that one blow—nothing worse can ever befall me than that; and already, thanks to you, I'm in a fair way of reversing it. Five thousand pounds—its glitter shines your words down, Ullathorne—I can think of nothing else; let me go and tell the girls."

"Stay," cries Ullathorne ; "it will come upon them as a shock——"

But, dazzled to the pitch of blindness by the golden certainties in my grasp, I go straight upstairs and into the room where Jill and Green Sleeves are sitting.

"I have good news for you, girls," I cry ; "I am going away the day after to-morrow for four or five years !"

Ah, me ! what are we, even the best of us, that women should love and cling to us so ? My selfish joy smites me keenly as a two-edged sword when I see the pallor as of death that gathers on my two dear girls' faces.

"*Dick !*"

It is Jill who speaks—Green Sleeves is dumb, with that in her brown eyes which might bring tears to my own.

"The years will soon pass," I say, looking from one to the other, while Ullathorne, his

back turned to us, stares out of window, "and I shall come back quite rich, girls, well on the road to winning back Sieviking. You wouldn't have me throw away such a chance as that?"

The intensity of the moment has passed—we are able to talk, to discuss the future, to make all necessary plans, for the time is short, within three days I must be prepared to start.

But presently I discover that Green Sleeves has slipped away, and we see her no more to-day.

On the morrow all is business and hurry; Ullathorne insists on remaining in town till I go, and does everything for me that a friend can. There are but two evenings before my departure, and strangely hushed and sweet, even solemn, are these evening hours when, in the old parlour, we four sit together, saying

little, counting as a miser does his gold the hours that are left us to be with one another.

It is late when, on the last night, Ullathorne leaves us ; he will be here again betimes on the morrow to speed me on my way—a sharper pang than any that has assailed me yet pierces my heart, as in parting with him to-night I realize that for some years I shall be deprived of the companionship that for the past two years has formed the best part of my life.

Pink May is absent in the country on a visit, taking the boys with her. I have only my two dear girls to whom to bid good night as we part on the stairs as the clock strikes one.

The house seems quiet and full of ghosts to-night . . . I feel that I would give something to hear Anak's noisy footstep and jovial voice—hark! what was that?

Somewhere, far away,—it savours more of

second sight than of actual hearing—I seem to hear the sound of weeping.

I must have slept, and wakened again, for there is a glimpse of daylight in the sky; I open my door, and listen, but there is no sound abroad. Through Jill's door, ajar, I hear her even breathing, behind that of Charolais, fast shut, there is utter silence.

I dress myself, and go downstairs, convinced that imagination has led me astray; but on the threshold of my den I pause, for within, I hear the sound of such passionate weeping as I never heard or dreamed of, from human lips before.

I softly push the door open, and the daylight that struggles in on the empty table, the cleared bookcases, all the cheerless signs of the impending desertion of a well-loved haunt, shows also a slight figure lying along the ground, with outstretched arms clasped fast about my chair.

O! my God, how she weeps! How the child must suffer, suffer always, with such a heart as this! I stoop, and, loosing her arms from about the chair, take her in my own, and seek to soothe her, as I never sought to soothe any other creature, having perhaps influence over, and love from, no one in such excess as this one poor child.

"O! Mr. Dick, Mr. Dick," she cries, between the sobs that tear her slender body in pieces, "it is not too late to change your mind now—don't go—don't go!"

"But I shall come back, my little Green Sleeves, my heart," I say, smoothing the brown hair from her brow; "have we not talked a hundred times of what we will do when I have won back Sieviking, and how many years of toil would it not take me to save up five thousand pounds?"

"Something bad will come to you," she

says, clinging to my hand; "something *here* tells me you are going away for evil, not good. If you come back, you will not be my Mr. Dick ever any more."

"Green Sleeves," I say, gravely, "is not your grief selfish, less for me than for yourself?"

"No," she says, weeping, still in that slow, terrible way; "if it were for your good I could bear it, but I know that it is not, and some day you will know it, too."

"Some day, Green Sleeves, when we are all happy at Sieviking, you will look back and laugh at these fears."

"That day will never come," she says, shivering, and turning paler than before; "Mr. Dick, *don't go*."

"You will be grown up by the time I come back, Green Sleeves; your hair will be fastened up, and——"

"You will not come back," she says, tremb-

ling; "you will not come back *once* in all these years?"

"Probably not. You will be over twenty, child; quite old."

"I won't grow more than I can help," she says, a rueful little figure, half slipping off my knee with my hand held fast between both hers, and pressed against her breast; "so that I may still be your little girl—you'll never call anyone Green Sleeves but me, will you, Mr. Dick?"

"Never."

"I'll take care of the old room," she says, with a heavy sigh; "and the pickles"—she glances at a distant shelf that contains an odd assortment of bottles—"I'm sorry I said I hated them so, and they're not so very nasty when you get used to them, and the boys shan't play tricks with the microscope, and—Mr. Dick!"

“Yes!”

“Will you see Lady Florizel abroad?”

“Very likely.”

“Then you and she will be married,” says Green Sleeves, the tears running down her cheeks; “and she will *never* let me sit with you, or be your little girl again.”

“Don’t you like her, Green Sleeves?”

“Yes,” says the child, after a moment’s miserable reflection; “but she does not like *me*. I heard her say to you—that day she came down here, and I was sitting beside you as you worked—‘Why is not that child at school?’ But you couldn’t have got on without me, could you, Mr. Dick?”

“No,” I answer, fondly smoothing the dark rings of hair from the childish face; “but I’m not going to be married to anybody, little one—I have only one love, and that’s Sieviking.”

“Mr. Dick, can you keep a secret?” This,

after a few moments of anxious study of my face.

“I’ll try.”

“And you’ll promise not to laugh?”

“I promise.”

“Well, then, *I’m* going to do something to win back Sieviking, too. I’m going”—in a tone of triumph—“to write a book.”

“What about, Green Sleeves?”

“Never you mind; but I mean to get a lot of money for it—all for Sieviking. It will help to pass the time till you come back,” she goes on, wistfully; “I shall sit in your very own chair, and sometimes shut my eyes hard, and make belief I am *you*.”

The room is full of daylight now; above stairs there is a stir of life; hard by, Ariel goes to and fro. Each familiar sound strikes sadly on my ears. How many long years will pass before I hear them again?

I draw Green Sleeves into my arms ; with a sigh, her head droops forward on my shoulder ; worn out by her lonely vigil, the child sleeps.

Breakfast is prepared, grows cold, but still she sleeps. Ullathorne is here ; the moment of departure has come, but she still sleeps on. I lay her down gently at last on the old sofa, and kiss her on the lips . . . would to God I could bring back to thee, my little one, that innocent kiss, the first, last pure one I gave thee !

O ! simple, happy home—never simple or unhaunted to me again—why did I leave you for lust of gold ?

“Ullathorne,” I say, hoarsely, as we drive away, Jill’s anguished farewell over, “come and see them sometimes ; try to cheer them up a bit—I leave them in your hands.”

A fatal charge—what madness impels me to it ?

“There is no danger now,” he mutters below his breath; then, aloud, “ay, I will go, Dick—sometimes. Heavens! how some day that child will—*love*.”



BOOK III.



CHAPTER I.

“ It was na in the ha’ the ha’,
Nor in the painted bower,
But it was in the gude green wood
Amang the lily flower.”



LOOKED through the window, and there she was, swinging herself under the boughs of the old cherry tree, and as she swung higher and higher, a shower of the white blossoms fell over her. A bird had perched himself on the wall hard by, and was singing as though he

would burst his little throat with ecstasy, and he and she seemed to sing and move in rhythm, while her thoughts, like swallows, flew in and out of the sunbeams, and the song, and the falling shower of leaves.

The house behind me was dark and silent. Where were the voices that once rang so cheerfully through the gloom? The place seemed full of ghosts as I left the window, and approached the looking-glass that hung above the fireless hearth.

Among these ghosts was a tall, somewhat taciturn fellow, whom the rest called Dick; he had a clear boyish face, with some hope and belief in it, but I say to myself that he too is gone, as the depths of the mirror give back a bronzed, stern-visaged man, who has surely never erred on the side of hope or belief in anything living yet.

I had found the house-door ajar, and

entered, expecting to be greeted by a shout of familiar voices, but the birds alone broke the stillness, as the swinger was the only sign of life. But now the swing is empty, and I hear her coming with a snatch of song upon her lips towards me.

“The bonniest lass in a’ Glasgow town
This day is awa’ wi’ a Hieland Laddie!”

she sings, as she enters the house with a step that keeps time to her voice.

I am sitting in the old chair, my back is to the light, and she cries out suddenly at sight of me, dashes forward a step or two, then back again, with disappointment in her brown eyes.

“I thought you were Mr. Dick,” she says, sitting down opposite me, just as slight a young thing for all her twenty years as when I parted from her so long ago, “but you’re not”—she wipes away a tear with one of the

frills of her white gown—"so I suppose you must be *Will*."

"Why not *Kit*?"

"I've seen *him*," she says ruefully; "he came home and *stopped*, you know. He wore out the horsehair sofa, and Pink May's patience, and—and everybody's, and then he went away again. I think I shall like you better—for you're more like Mr. Dick."

"That's not wonderful."

"But I don't think you're so tall; would you mind standing up? I thought so—he is quite *half* a head taller than you are, and in face there is only a very faint resemblance. See, I have his portrait here," and she draws from her neck a locket, and holds it out to me at the end of the long ribbon.

I take it from her hand; and was that my face once, Green Sleeves, and has it lain on your innocent heart all these years?

"He is quite as beautiful as that," she says, proudly, when I give it back to her. "When he looks at you, all mean things seem to shrivel up; but he is not stern to the people whom he loves."

"Child," I cry, abruptly, "it is many years since you saw him; he has probably altered. Very likely you would not know him again if he did come."

"Not know him!" she cries, swiftly, "Is his a face that any one could forget? But do you know that sometimes I begin to think he will *never* come back."

"Why should he not?"

"We don't know, but we guess (she turns her head aside) that it is Lady Florizel who is detaining him. She cannot leave her father, who has been slowly dying for years—and so—so—Mr. Dick stays too."

"But he went for five years,"

"Yes, but at the end of four, the lad's father died, and so he came home, and of course we thought *he* would come too. It is not *like* him," she adds, shaking her head sadly, "he so loves his profession; he always worked so hard at it—to throw a whole six months away in this fashion."

"And why should it be Lady Florizel's doing?"

"He is constantly with her, and he liked her before he went abroad, but she—*loved* him."

"It seems to me that he deserves no woman's love, child," I say, bitterly.

"You are jealous," she says, proudly, and with a smile like sunlight. "Why, *everyone* loves and looks up to him. You should hear that lad talk about him——"

"You call him a lad? He must be three-and-twenty."

“O! he is quite young,” she says, with immense dignity. “Then Ullathorne has never been the same man since Mr. Dick went away; he comes here often, and we sit and talk about him by the hour.”

I glance at her beauty; is it a far-fetched simile to compare a young girl's face to a field of waving corn, with which flowers are blent, that sways and blooms and ruffles itself to every breath and caprice of the morning breezes? But in the varying colour and mood of the face before me, noted by eyes that have grown to hate beauty for beauty's sake, I find that only which strikes my heart with a chill foreboding of coming evil.

“And Hetty?”

“Hetty is—Hetty. She is kind to me. I often see her.”

“And Jill, God bless her?”

“She is just—happy.”

For Jill is married, and by way of set-off against leaving the twins at home, Providence last year graciously bestowed upon her twins of her own.

“And Solomon and the Squiffer?”

“Earning forty pounds a year a-piece,” she says, proudly. “They will be in directly. Mr. Will?”

“Well?”

“I’m going to earn some money, too, for I’ve written a book. O! it was such hard work,” she says, with a dismal shake of the head. “I *cried* over it often, but when I thought of Sieviking, and helping to buy it back again, I got on quite fast.”

“And has Ullathorne read it?”

“Why should he?” she cries, with a sudden fear in her voice; then, as her eyes meet mine, she falters and turns aside. “No one will see it but—Mr. Dick.”

Friend, friend, is it thus that thou hast rewarded me for the trust I had in thee? Not one moment too soon have I returned home, if indeed it be not already too late.

"Where is Pink May?" I say, abruptly. "Perhaps she will have a word of welcome for one who has been absent so long."

"I beg your pardon," says Charolais, smitten with compunction; "you would be very welcome indeed, only that you see we are expecting somebody else. Are you hungry? Ariel may be some time yet, for she has got a sweetheart, and they are always quarrelling, and when once they begin to quarrel she never thinks of the time. Is your luggage on the doorstep?"

"No."

"You needn't mind," she says, nodding, "Kit had none either; and when Anak came back from Natal, last year, he just brought—

himself. But he had saved all his money ; and you should only have seen the suit of clothes in which he gave Jill away !”

“ And the sisters, did they come ?”

“ They were not asked ; but they thought Jill made a mistake. He works for his bread, you know, and that is *low*. He is a barrister.”

“ I wonder if *she* would know Dick, if she saw him ?”

“ Know him ? Why she loves him even better than Tom and the twins, I do believe. Mr. Will ?”

“ Well ?”

“ I want to ask you a question. Would you—would you, as a matter of taste, *admire* a young lady who was twenty-four years old, and had grey eyes and fair hair that *wouldn't* curl, especially if you happened to be fair yourself ?”

"The plainer she was the better I should like her."

"O!" says Charolais, disappointedly; "then you would like this one very much, indeed, for she's *not* pretty. But she can talk," she adds, with a sigh; "she makes the time fly when you are with her, and that I suppose is why people find it so hard to get away from her and . . . do you know, it is very wicked—but sometimes I do wish the old Earl would *die*?"

"For what reason?"

"Because she would come home then, and Mr. Dick would come, too—she might let him come to see us sometimes, he would not be *dead* to us, as he is now."

"But he writes to you?"

"Hardly ever—and then only *scraps*. For the first three years he wrote regularly—then a change came, and after that somehow we lost him."

“And you don’t think he will come home again—to stay?”

“No,” she says, looking round, wistfully. “I have kept all in order for him, and his books—and pickles, and bones; but sometimes I sit in his old chair, and cry to think of how *he* will never work in it again—for when the Earl dies, of course, he will marry—*her*.”

“And your book—of what use will it be then?”

“I never thought of that,” she says, sadly, “till I had finished it. She is so rich, and she loves him; she is able to give him fifty Sievings if she pleases. But, Mr. Will, do you think he will care for it that way as much as if he had *earned* it?”

“And you can think of him thus?” I say, sternly.

“He loves her,” says Charolais, “and she loves him—the mere accident of her wealth is

nothing. But I wish I could have helped him, if it was ever so little, to win it back. I can *never* do anything to repay him now for all his goodness to me."

"Green Sleeves!"

"You must not call me that," she cries, quickly; "no one ever did, no one ever shall, but Mr. Dick."

"Green Sleeves, come here."

She trembles, then slowly, with her eyes full of fear and doubt, comes to my side and looks in my face.

Will the child's eyes hit the blot—is my story, indeed, written in my eyes that all who run may read?

"You have his features," she says, slowly, a dawning recognition in her own, "and—and—but no!" she cries, passionately, "you are not, you *cannot* be my Mr. Dick!"

"There—go," I say, harshly, "long as I

have been absent, I had better not have returned at all, since there is no one, not even Green Sleeves, to give me a welcome."

"I think, my dear," says Pink May's voice from the threshold, in rather ruffled tones, "that if you receive gentlemen in my absence, it should be in the parlour, in spite of the green paper—so very unbecoming to a young girl's complexion."

"Aunt," I say, taking her up in my arms, and giving her a kiss, "don't *you* know me, either?"

"You're not Kit," she says, all of a flutter, as I set her down, "and perhaps—considering Anak and the bottled beer, you know—it's just as well. I think, dear boy, you must be Will."

"Here are the boys," I say, "let's see who *they* say I am."

"Charolais," they cry, rushing in, "we can

take you a long, country walk to-night," stopping short, like young bulls in mad career, at sight of a stranger.

They have grown tall, broad-shouldered fellows, with open, honest countenances, not unlike Anak's, but without that invincible drollery that makes his face a very magnet to attract laughter.

"Well, who am I?"

"It's *Dick!*" cries the Squiffer, after a raking survey at the distance of half a yard from my nose; "welcome home, old fellow—he seizes my hand and wrings it—" *I* know you by that mark on your forehead that you got when you tumbled over the wall into the pigsty; but that beard is a twister that your own mother mightn't get over."

"So it is," cries Solomon, gripping my other hand; "but, I say, Dick, you've grown into a regular old fogey—hasn't he, Charolais?"

But Charolais has vanished.

"Dear boy," says Pink May, coming behind me, and kissing the tip of my nose, "I'm *rejoiced* to see you ; and now we shall hear all about the Paris fashions."

"Solomon and I have saved up thirty pounds between us towards buying back Sieviking," says the Squiffer, triumphantly ; "and we don't owe a penny in the world."

"And Anak has saved fifty," says Solomon.

"And I sixty, out of the housekeeping," says Pink May.

"And then, there's Charolais's book," says the Squiffer, proudly ; "and Jill is saving, too ; she wouldn't marry 'Tom till he promised she might save as much as she could towards helping us to buy Sieviking."

"And there is your five thousand pounds, dear," says Pink May, grandly.

"No," I say, "not so much as that—a

thousand less ; but it is yours, aunt, and was paid in to your account this morning."

"Dear boy," she cries, startled ; "why did you do that? But, of course, it is all the same; it can stay there till you are able to add enough to it to buy the old place."

"I shall never buy it back," I say, abruptly ; "the money is only valuable to me now as giving me an opportunity of proving my gratitude to you, aunt."

"Never buy back Sieviking!" ejaculates the Squiffer, all the brightness dashed from his young face ; "and we have worked so hard, we have denied ourselves in everything to be able to feel that we were helping, if only to buy back a square yard of the dear old house."

"There are too few of us," I say, calmly, but touched to the heart, nevertheless ; "Jill

is gone, Anak is away; if we went back, it would never be the same."

"But it was something to look forward to, to work *for*," they cry, in a breath, looking at me with a dull estrangement that is one of the hardest thrusts I have experienced in this inhospitable home country.

"Perhaps Lady Florizel does not like the country," says Pink May, hoping to throw oil on the troubled waters.

"There's no Lady Florizel that ever stepped who's worth losing Sieviking for," they say as they go heavily away; and, in my heart, I echo, "No, not one."



CHAPTER II.

*"O! weel sall ye my true love ken,
Hae sune as ye her see,
For o' a' the flowers o' fair England,
The fairest flower is she."*



OW, that your beard is off," says Pink May, "it seems incredible that we should not have known you at first; for, except that you look older, you are exactly the same as when you went away."

"You are altered," says Jill, wistfully, as she strokes my hair with the old motherly touch. "I miss something in your face, dear, though I don't know what it is."

"You are improved," says Bell, critically.

"You have lost that air of being so intensely in earnest over everything, that used to make people feel uncomfortable. Florizel has certainly given you *polish*."

"It is a pity you could not have brought her back with you," says Hetty, "after waiting a whole year, too; it was most provoking!"

"Really, the old man is an unconscionable time in dying," says Cynthia in her soft gutturals; "he wants Sairy Gamp by to send him off like a lamb. But I do think it was very unwise of Dick not to wait a little longer; for who knows but that, left to herself over there, she may fall in love with somebody else?"

"You have a high opinion of Florizel—and me," I say, drily; "but to relieve your minds of any further anxiety on the point, I may tell you that we have not the remotest idea of getting married."

"You are not engaged?" screams Bell.

"You have quarrelled?" cries Hetty.

"Neither the one nor the other—we are better friends than ever."

"Some of your high-flown notions about not living on your wife's money, I suppose," says Bell, indignantly. "And so she is to wait, forsooth, till you have satisfied your ridiculous pride by earning a paltry competence. It's simply disgraceful, considering that she has wasted five of the best years of her life on you already!"

"Who told you that we had any thoughts of one another?" I say, facing round on them all. "You made up your minds that it was *to be*, and there was an end of it all, without the slightest reference to the persons most concerned in the business."

"And pray," says Bell, trying, but failing to sit erect in the luxurious couch in which she is sunk, "will you deny that you flirted

with her the whole of the season before she went abroad—that you never looked at, or spoke to another woman but her?”

“Flirted?” I say, contemptuously. “No—I leave that to women; I never *flirted* with Florizel. She was the only woman I ever met in society with whom I cared to exchange two words—and I like her even better now than I did then.”

“A little aversion to begin with would be better than this deadly *liking*,” says Bell, with a groan. “However, I wash my hands of you—it’s no use to *try* and help the boys of the family—we ought all to have been *girls*.”

“Poor Florizel!” says Hetty, “I don’t think liking will content *her*—she was *difficile* to a fault till she knew Dick—and then——”

“Ullathorne!”

He was away when I returned—this is our first meeting, but, as we grip hands, the

words of welcome on either lips die unspoken.

If I have changed, so has he. Haggard, worn, with burning eyes whence a fever of restless longing seems to look, he has aged by fifteen years since we bade each other farewell, and his looking-glass should cause any changes he may find in me to appear but faint and shadowy indeed.

And yet, when we are alone, when he puts his hands on my shoulders, and looks me in the face, I know that he reads my soul as clearly as though no shadow lay on his own.

He casts himself down by the table, groaning; and, covering his face with his hands, cries, "O! God, why did I send him away?"

Why, indeed, but that Fate ever sends us eagerly to our undoing. . . . I know now how true the instinct was that made Green Sleeves cry, "Don't go! don't go!" how needed

were the words of warning spoken by Ullathorne at parting.

"Dick," he says, lifting his haggard face, "I'd give half my fortune not to have persuaded you to go with that lad; it has meant shipwreck, or I'm much mistaken, to more lives than one!"

"To more than one?" I cry, hoarsely, my heart turning cold with a terrible fear. "Ullathorne, you cannot, you dare not, mean to—*her?*"

"Why did you leave her in my care?" he cries, pacing the room with wild and hurried steps; "that was the most fatal, the most miserable part of the whole business! Away from her, I might have mastered my passion; but to see her often, to be compelled to forever contrast her with one whom I have sworn to love and honour, it has driven me mad, it is killing me by inches; and, now that you

have returned to see my degradation, it will be *hell*."

"Is it you who are speaking," I say, cold as if life itself had left me; "*you!*"

"Ay!" he cries, recklessly; "trample on and despise me; cast me out from the place I once held in your heart, and that now I am not worthy to fill; pour out upon me your heaviest wrath and hatred, but never can you speak one-half the awful condemnation of my own soul!"

"You can rave of your own black, guilty soul," I cry, with a strong shudder as of intense cold; "of condemnation — damnation were a better word—but what of her's? O! God help me to forget that ever you and I have been as brothers — and more than brothers!" I say, between my teeth; "if I have fallen, thank God I have not fallen to this—the last, foulest

breach of trust the heart of *friend* ever conceived."

"Sieviking," he cries, starting up, "these words, and to me? Guilty, erring, I have been, but do I deserve *this*?"

"Ay! and worse," I cry, swept away by a whirlwind of fiercest scorn and loathing; "can you, who shrink not from the deed, bear to hear it called by its right name—*dishonour*?"

"Dishonour!" For one moment a fire flashes in his eye equal to mine; he dashes forward, his hand clenched as mine in that dead heat of passion in which life is valued at less than a shrivelled leaf, then his hands, unlocking, fall at his sides; the sweat of agony gathers on his brow; below his breath, as he turns aside, I hear him whisper, "for her." . . .

"Man, man," I cry, "what devil tempted you to this deed? And was it *this* that I have loved all these years?"

"My promise to you," he says, lifting his head, "I have kept to the letter—at what a cost you will never know. My dishonour concerns myself alone."

"There may be a dishonour done to a woman's soul," I say, sternly, "heinous as the destruction of the body, and when that inner sanctuary be won, what matter though the shrine itself be spared? It is not enough that you have never spoken to her of love, if you have been the means of bringing love to her heart."

He turns suddenly, a light overspreading his worn face—a light that some day I shall understand, but not now.

"For the sake of the past years of friendship," he says, vehemently, "answer me this one question. Do you, for all that your face tells me, return home—*free*?"

Silence—that grows deeper and deeper; then,

“God help us all!” he says, below his breath; and there is silence again, and twilight gathers and falls, settling down in darkness upon one heart, at least, in which love is dying, dying hard, stubbornly fighting every inch of the way . . . one, at least, that is living over again the past years of friendship, counting, with a miser’s lingering touch, its golden store. . . . O! friend, who comest to a man but once in his lifetime, while of women in the world there are many, I have no power to thrust thee forth . . . to Death alone is given that power, when he shall break the casket that contains thee.

“And so we have loved one another, and been wise each for the other, and this is the end.”

Is it Ullathorne’s voice that speaks?

“Friend, some day you will know me better . . . some day you will know that,

untrue as I have been to myself—to her, and to you, I have been faithful always ; and against my memory you will wipe out the word—dishonour.”

A hand rests for a moment lightly upon my bowed head, when presently I lift it, I am alone.



CHAPTER III.

"Gin I had wist, or had kist
That love had been sae hard to win,
I had locked my heart wi' a key of gowd,
And pinned it with a silver pin."



HE swing is always empty, no
snatches of song break the drowsy
quiet of the house. Years ago I
used to complain that I could not
work for the tumult around me—now the very
silence itself seems to come between my books
and me.

The boys are never at home these long summer evenings; they are at their cricket, or

escorting Charolais for a walk. Pink May sits with her book or knitting under the cherry-tree by the garden wall, Ariel conducts her evening quarrel out of earshot—and, Green Sleeves, where is she ?

Sometimes with Hetty, sometimes, as I have said, out with the boys, oftener still at home—in any case, she is alike invisible to me.

My work takes me abroad during the day, but at my evening meal no Green Sleeves presides, though I know that she has “passed by there” by the fresh bunch of now wild, now garden, flowers, that never fails to stand beside my plate.

How different to the welcome home that I expected ; how changed from the time when the two girls snatched at every opportunity to sit beside me, and I was king of the little commonwealth in which for subjects I now reckon but one !

"Pink May, God bless her! is my willing slave; her garrulous talk flows on like a sea, forming a mere background to my thoughts; but now and again a word or two go farther than my ears—they reach my brain. Something ails Charolais, she says; she is never noisy now, the house used to be full of her; but now you would not know she was in it.

The boys eye me resentfully, in some indefinite way they believe me to be at the bottom of the change in their adored playmate, but I know better.

She could laugh and swing, she could be happy, so long as the object of her unconscious love was by her, but when he went away, the sharp, sudden pain of his going woke her to a knowledge of her own heart; and now, in her shame and her love alike, she suffers.

I believe Ullathorne spoke truth when he swore that he had *spoken* no word of love; but

when on the rare occasions of my seeing the child, I mark the change in her—the averted glance, the down-bent head, the pallor where the rosy hue of health used to glow, I curse within my breast the man who has blighted her.

Once, in the dead of night, I hear her weeping. “Poor Green Sleeves, poor little heart,” I say to myself, as I listen, “your sorrows have begun early!”

And yet I cannot but despise her; ignorant of evil as she is, there should surely be within her some instinct of purity to guard her against nourishing, however unconsciously, this love for Ullathorne, the married man, and loyalty to Hetty alone prevent her thinking of him other than a friend.

Does she shun me, knowing that I possess her secret? or is it that the shock of finding me so different to what she had persuaded her-

self I was to be, has caused a complete revulsion of the old childish affection she bore me ?

If her instinct has not guided her aright with Ullathorne, it has done so with me—she said truly that I was not Mr. Dick—he is dead, and with him all the old hopes, the old ambitions. Sieviking even is no longer the object of my ambition ; were it given back to me to-morrow it would not cause me one throb of pleasure.

To work, for work's sake, taking no thought for that dull, dead to-morrow, which my life must henceforth be—this is the end to which the high ambitions of the youth who

“ Left his home with a bounding heart,
For the world was all before him,”

have come.

Well may the poem with which these lines begin, be termed an epicedeum !

The boys are at their cricket to-night, Pink

May, too, is absent, and the heat and stillness seem to suffocate me as I go to the window and look out on the burnt patch of grass that we call our garden. As I so stand, some fragments of paper come fluttering down from an upper window, and fall on the ground without.

There let them lie—they may contain a secret; but in one way I profit by them, for they give me a clue to Green Sleeves' whereabouts.

She is rarely downstairs; I have once or twice wondered where she hides herself. I fling my cigar away, with the sudden resolve to go and find out. It is a small house, but it has unexpected nooks and corners. As I ascend the stairs, I remember having long ago seen one tiny room at the top of them, that would at a pinch hold two people, one writing table, and a chair.

It lies back a little way, and might easily be

overlooked, but as I pause outside it I distinctly hear the scratch, scratch of a pen as it travels over the paper.

I am literally shod in the shoes of silence, otherwise in slippers of Green Sleeves' own working, so I am able to approach the door unheard, and even, for it stands ajar, to look in.

At a deal table, drawn close to the window and scattered over by papers, with a prodigious smudge of ink on her nose, and another on the forefinger that anxiously travels down the page of Johnson's dictionary open before her, sits my Lady Green Sleeves, compelling from me the first smile that has crossed my lips since I returned home.

How serious, how absorbed! The world surely is hanging on the fate of the word for which she is searching, and this is the first book that was written since the world began.

She closes the volume with a solemn shake

of the head, resumes her pen with a business-like air, and begins to write as though she meant to go on for ever.

But all at once she lays down the pen, and thrusting her little ink-stained fingers through the dark hair ruffled into a hundred dusky rings, "It's very hard work," she says, sighing.

"Let me help you, Green Sleeves," I say, pushing open the door, and repent of my abruptness, when, with a cry, she spreads out her arms over the papers as if to hide them, and turns pale as death.

"Green Sleeves, may I come in?"

"It is all yours," she says, still keeping that jealous guard over her papers; "and this room is yours, and, and—you will come in if you please."

I turn on my heel without a word, and leave her.

But I have not gone half-a-dozen steps when

the patter of feet comes after mine, and a fresh voice cries anxiously :

“Mr. Dick, I *didn't* mean it!”

Going straight to my den, I am soon absorbed in my work ; it is with a start of surprise, therefore, that I presently feel a touch on my arm, and, looking up, see Charolais standing beside me. I finish the chapter, shut the book, and wait for her to begin.

“I *didn't* mean it, Mr. Dick!” she says, desperately.

“Then why did you say it?”

She does not answer, only falls to stripping the whorls from the stalk of the water gilly-flower stuck in her belt.

“People who stay away as long as I did, should never come back at all ; others fill their places, and they are forgotten.”

“No,” she says, in a low voice ; “it is because they are *remembered* so keenly, that

after a long absence their faces seem strange to their friends."

"Am I so very much altered?" I say, involuntarily.

"You look," she says, lifting her eyes to mine, "as if you could never try *hard* for anything again. You used to have a bright, forward-out look, as if you saw something beautiful shining at the end of a long road, and were pressing towards it heart and soul—*now* you seem to see nothing but the present."

"Perhaps the change is not in me only, child; others may have changed also.

The guilty colour leaps into her cheek; she starts aside, as a wild animal may who spies the hunter approaching. My heart sinks as I mark these signs of fear—suddenly, I resolve to test her.

"Charolais, do you miss Ullathorne?"

"Miss him?" she cries, passionately; "every

day I miss him more, every day I *value* him more; until he went away I never knew what he was to me. 'Tell me," she cries, with tears in her eyes, "*why did he go?*"

As her eyes meet mine, I could swear, but for her blushes awhile ago, that she does not love him, or that if it be so, she is entirely unconscious of that love. Not thus boldly does a woman utter her inmost heart; silence is its finest eloquence, as a stammer is its truest expression.

"They say he went for his health," she goes on, "but he has looked as ill as that for *years*. Even Hetty noticed it long ago. I've got a notion—don't be angry, Mr. Dick!—that his going away had something to do with *you?*"

"Why do you think that?" I say, in measured tones.

"Because, after seeing you once, only *once*, he went away; and for how many years had

he not been looking for your return! In this very room, for what long hours have we not sat and talked of you (for a moment she turns aside, and the blushes come thick in her face), of what we would do, of your career in life, and the name you would some day make; and now he is *gone*, and Hetty even does not know when he will come back."

A light breaks in on me.

"So that is why you are angry with me?" I say, sternly; "because you think I sent him?"

"If you did," she cries, passionately, "you sent away the truest, best friend a man ever had." She faces me defiantly. How early love teaches defiance! My heart hardens against her as I look.

"And do you know of no reason why I should bid him go?"

It is one of those moments when truth

is forced out of us, when we use speech to convey our thoughts, not to hide them. A flash of truth like this is electric. Involuntarily she exclaims, "He has"—then stops short, but I can complete the sentence—"told you?"

For a moment I look at her as she stands, her cheeks dyed with guilty blushes; yet in her eyes the shining of such a great love as beats down the shame and makes her just as pure and gladsome a thing as if that love were to her a crown of honour; then I turn aside, struck to the very soul. Here is indeed proof—

"Strong as Holy Writ,"

and, if I am not much mistaken, here also is no girl's fancy, lightly made and lightly broken, but such a love as time and absence will never break.

"And so this is why you have avoided me,

Charolais," I say, wearily—surely there can be no pretence of secrets between us two now—"because I sent him away?"

"No," she says, turning her head aside; "it was not that, but I was *ashamed* to look you in the face . . . I could not get over it . . . I never *shall* get over it—she pauses, and covers her face with her hands. "To make such a dreadful mistake, to talk to you about *her* in that manner, to ask you if you *admired* the person you were going to be married to!"

"Charolais," I say, sternly; "this is disingenuous; have you been avoiding me for no other reason than this insignificant one?"

"It was a dreadful thing to say—that she had hair that *wouldn't* curl; but perhaps it might—with tongs."

I look at her sharply; her face is as grave as a judge, but the corners of her mouth are not quite steady.

"Green Sleeves," I cry, "you are a little spiteful, saucy, incomprehensible minx, and—

"O! call me that again!" she cries, joyfully; "call me your Green Sleeves, your little Green Sleeves, that used to sit by your side and help you with the pickles. I'm *not* grown very much after all, am I?"

"No, but you're not the Green Sleeves I left behind. For one thing, you have grown pretty, and I hate beauty—downright wholesome ugliness is far more to my taste."

"Ah! that is why you are so fond of Lady Florizel?"

"Now you are rude, as well as spiteful."

"I daresay I can make myself ugly, too," she says, nodding; "it's *much* more natural to most people to be ugly than pretty. Now, I like folks to be good-looking; it was a dreadful shock to me to find you so altered for the

worse. Doesn't *she* see a great difference in you?"

"I never asked her."

"Perhaps it's her doing," hazards Green Sleeves, innocently; "if so, of course, she wouldn't notice it."

"No, you are not Green Sleeves," I say, looking at her; "the little girl I used to call by that name was neither malicious nor evil speaking."

"She should not make you unhappy, then," says the child, hanging her head.

"How do you know she does so?"

"No one else could. But perhaps it's only when you're *away* from her that you look like that?"

"Then I'm likely to look so for a long while."

"But she'll come back some day, Mr. Dick," she says gently

"Not to me."

She looks at me for a moment; then the tears come into her eyes—

“O! Mr. Dick, Mr. Dick!” she cries, laying her little hand on mine, “forgive me, do forgive me—but I didn’t know.”

“You have done no harm, child—my heart is not broken. But I shall never marry.”

She looks at me sorrowfully, but by degrees a ripple of joy, beginning at her lips, spreads upwards to her brown eyes, till her face is a bit of pure sunshine.

“What good times we will have, you and I together,” she says, with a beaming smile, “just as if we had never grown up at all, but stopped young as we used to be! But you’re *quite* sure your heart’s not broken—because I wouldn’t for the world be happy at your expense?”

“Quite sure. I’ve only lost every illusion that makes life worth having.”



CHAPTER IV.

"She brightened like the lily flower,
Till her colour pale was gone,
With rosy cheek and ruby lip
She smiled her love upon."



IVA in love with *Green Sleeves!*"

"He went down on his knees to her in this very room, and begged her to marry him—such an extraordinary thing—two proposals in a room with a green paper; so very unbecoming to a young girl's complexion, you know!"

"And what did she say?"

"Told him to get up again, or she would box his ears soundly."

"*That* was very unbecoming too."

"Charolais can be very decided when she pleases," says Pink May, nodding, "and she forbade my telling a soul, and I haven't—particularly you, whom I have—— Here she comes."

"It is good to be merry and wise,
It is good to be honest and true,
It is well to be on with the old love
Before you are *off* with the new!"

are the sentiments with which Green Sleeves heralds her advent.

She is beginning to pick up her spirits again—like all young things. She finds it harder to be miserable than to be happy.

"You here!" she exclaims, stopping short on the parlour threshold at seeing me sitting within. "How early you have done work to-day!"

"That's a pretty song, Green Sleeves, you were singing," I say, as she sits down, her lap

full of spoils gathered from that Lady Freyja after whom, in Northern Europe, all flower and insect life is named.

"It is quite my own idea," she says, picking up a stalk of Canterbury bells, and shaking them close to her ear, as though she expected to hear a chime ring out.

"Suggested by experience, Green Sleeves?"

"I hunted for this yellow sun-rose everywhere," she says, looking down at her flowers, "and this blood-flower; but though I found them at last, *nowhere* could I find a star of Bethlehem."

My eyes, fixed on the flowers in the child's lap, do not see them; they travel past and beyond to Sieviking, that for above a year I have not once visited. For who will deny that in the spirit only are some of our sweetest, saddest journeys made? and surely, though no human eye or ear knows of our presence,

the well-loved haunts, the familiar ways are conscious of our step as it passes by? They are real pilgrimages to us, just as the dead, the lost, the estranged, come to us in our sleep, and as we press kisses on their flesh and blood-warm faces, feel the grip of their hands, hear the ring of their "God keep you!" and, awakening, know it to be a dream, then the wakening seems the dream, as the dream for many a day seems the reality.

"Our passions," says Confucius, "shut up the doors of our souls against God," and, if the Maker, then against His works also. That scorching breath dims the freshness and beauty of all upon which we look, and Sieviking itself recedes from me as I would approach it.

I no longer think of it with longing; I would not accept it now as a free gift. I even hate to think that I once so passionately

desired it; hate to be reminded of those lofty ideals of my youth that now lie shattered as common clay at my feet.

“So Siva is back again, Green Sleeves?”

“Yes.”

She looks quickly at Pink May, innocently sunk in her knitting, then at me, and colours brilliantly. Confound these complexions that give back every shade of emotion, and are very will-o'-the-wisps to mislead one. Am I again being made the fool of a blush when it occurs to me that it is *Siva* after whom Green Sleeves has been fretting, not Ullathorne?

“How long has he been away?”

“Let me see,” says Pink May; “I was unpicking my old red silk, when he came bursting in—to say ‘How d’ye do?’ you know (catching Green Sleeves’ eye), and I had it re-dipped in March; it must have been February when he went.”

"He will be improved," says Green Sleeves, picking up a cloudberry from her lap, "for he will be five months older."

"You are in a great hurry to grow old, child."

"I like boys to *be* boys," she says, gravely. "Now Anak and the twins are bricks, but Lord Siva wants to be grown up, and——"

"He is nearly as old as Ullathorne was when he married Hetty," I say, drily. "But how came he here?"

"We met him at Hetty's," says Pink May, "and there he asked if he might come and have a chat with us about *you*; so he took our address and wrote it down before everybody."

"I thought Bell and Cynthia would have had a fit," says Green Sleeves, breaking into a peal of laughter; "I believe they prayed he might *die* before that visit ever came off!"

“And did he faint on the doorstep?” I say, laughing.

“Anak happened to be sitting on it, in his shirt sleeves, with a jug of beer beside him (it was a very hot day), so he asked Lord Siva to have some, and they were having a very good time indeed when we came down stairs.”

“It was very unfortunate that Anak should have been at home just then, and *on* the doorstep,” says Pink May, “but luckily I had got a most becoming cap on, and Charolais was quite neat, so it might have been worse.”

“We talked about you,” says Green Sleeves, “till our breath was gone, and then—he went.”

“But he came back,” says Pink May, nodding.

“He told us of all your doings abroad,” says

Green Sleeves, clasping her hands about her knees, and looking at me thoughtfully, "of how, wherever you went, *you* were always taken for him——"

"And called by every one the English 'milord,'" interpolates Pink May, "while all the ladies, without exception, were in love with you!"

"Thinking I was Lord Siva," I say, drily; "that would have been a compliment indeed if it had been true, which it was not."

"He told us a story," says Pink May, putting her hand to her head, "of some adventure you both had in Milan. I can't recollect it, but I know there was a lady in it. Can you recollect what it was, Charolais?"

"No," she says, intent on her flowers; "it was just like the other stories—somebody took a fancy to Mr. Dick, thinking he was Lord Siva!"

She looks up earnestly enough, but our eyes meet, and are held fast to each other. And now, if I possess Green Sleeves' secret, she also possesses mine.



CHAPTER V.

"The white o' my my love's skin is white
As down o' dove or maw;
The red o' my love's cheek is red
As blood that's spilt on snaw."



AN he mean anything?"

"What luck if he does!"

"There is something in the very name that tempts matrimony. He thought at first she was Miss Sieviking, and the thing was done!"

Thus Bell and Hetty, as Green Sleeves and Siva, the first couple, delicately take the floor before them.

Though she is twenty this is her first ball, and Bell's last for the season, for July is in, and soon the floodgates of fashion will be out.

"Just in time, too. I've been quite in a fright about Dick. You see she's so very pretty——"

"And they are always together."

"And Florizel is away——"

"It would be Madness!"

"Ruin!"

"Sin!"

"A waltz would be preferable," I say, advancing and taking Hetty round the waist—a very pretty waist yet, if not so slim as it used to be, and taking her the length of the room before she has recovered her breath.

"What news have you of Ullathorne?" I say, as we pause by an open window.

"I wonder you dare to ask me," cries Hetty, indignantly; "I don't know what passed

between you at our house that afternoon, but as to his rushing off next day on the score of illness, it was ridiculous—he had looked like that for ages.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if you have him back again before very long,” I say, looking at Siva and Green Sleeves. And, indeed, with these two happy, handsome young people mated, what is there to prevent his coming home again, and my again possessing the friend that, in spite of all, I love better than any other living creature upon earth?

“I don’t know how you manage to get and *keep* such an influence over people?” she says, looking at me with half-angry, half-admiring eyes. “Ullathorne can’t do it; I should be made to behave myself, I suppose, if he could.”

“He is too good for you,” I say, warmly; “you would have made a capital wife to a man

who would beat and lock you up once a week, if you didn't please him."

"I think I should have liked that," says Hetty, meditatively, as she looks down on the exquisite arms that lie in her lap; "it must be because you are always so violent that I stand in such wholesome fear of you. I should not wonder if your wife were a very happy woman, even if she were black and blue occasionally."

"My wife!"

The room grows dark before me; I tear the glove I am holding between my hands into ribands, and then wonder who has done it, as I look down on the fragments at my feet.

"They make a pretty pair," says Hetty, her eyes fixed on two of the dancers, "and you can see that he really is head over ears in love with her. It is quite a stroke of luck; for, of course, he might marry almost any-

body that he pleased—it is lucky his father is not living!”

A man might be prepared to overlook a good deal who saw Green Sleeves, as she comes sweeping past in Siva's arms, her feet going “as pat to the music as its echo,” her brown eyes brilliant with joy, with cheeks warm as roses that grow on a wall

“The side that's next the sun,”

lips parted in a little vehement pant for breath, and a white breast that heaves passionate response to the music.

Siva is no bad specimen of his class. Tall, clean-limbed, ruddy, with that general air of soap and water peculiar to the Englishman, his body is a good reflection of the mind within, and a woman might love and marry, and be happy with him to her life's end.

A woman—but Green Sleeves?

Hetty has flitted off. I am left alone, and

able to watch this young couple at my ease.

They look very happy, very well pleased with each other; a superficial observer might decide them to be perfectly contented lovers, but I know better.

For the present, one of the two at least, is enjoying herself as a dancer, pure and simple. Two young, healthy people, who abominate one another, may, so long as their step suits, and until the music ceases, be entirely happy together.

She comes to a sudden stop opposite me, by-and-by, her white dress blown out behind her like a cloud; her little, eager feet, checked in mid-career, looking like snow flakes newly lit on the black-polished floor, and, sitting down by my side, gives vent to a deep sigh of delight.

“O! Mr. Dick,” she says, “it would be just perfection if only *he* were here!”

Green Sleeves and I have almost fallen back into the old familiar ways. There are times when I forget that she has grown older, and she seems just the child that I left so unwillingly five years ago, but now and again my heart is bitter towards her in that she has lost to me my friend.

Usually she avoids speaking of him, though I know well enough when he is in her thoughts; but to-night her happiness has beaten tact out of the field; and, indeed, the proprieties usually come off badly at the hands of the emotions.

I look at her sternly, but she is not noticing or thinking of me, her eyes,

“ In the midst of their own brightness,
In the very face of lightness,
Over which their eyebrows leaning,
Picture out each lovely meaning,”

are far away, and Siva's hand, tugging restlessly at his moustache, betrays that he also

has overheard her speech, and is aware of her abstraction.

“Charolais,” says Bell, coming up, “allow me to introduce to you——” and a purblind, little old man, who has been ogling her from opposite for the past minute or two, having expressed a desire to totter through the Lancers by her aid, writes her name down, and, with a friskiness quite involuntary, departs.

“He has fallen in love with you,” says Bell, laughing; “don’t turn his brain if you can help it!”

“Has he a brain?” says Green Sleeves, looking after him.

“Come with me,” says Bell, “I want to show you something,” which means that she is going to cross-question her about Siva, and strenuously warn her to beware lest he slip through her fingers.

They go away together, Green Sleeves nod-

ding to Siva, who shows his jealousy, poor fellow, as though it were something to be proud of; some day he will be more ready to own to a crime than to such a sin against the social code.

"Sieviking," he says, abruptly, when they are gone, "who is this *he*?"

"You should know better than I; you have seen her constantly during the last year."

"I had my suspicions at one time," he says, looking at me, "but she was wishing him *here*; so I must have been wrong. Who can it be?" he goes on, restlessly. "She doesn't *know* any one, for she never went to your sisters except when they were alone, and nobody visited her at home but Ullathorne and myself."

I study his face keenly; clearly he has no suspicion of the truth . . . but love is blind,

"Sieviking," he says, abruptly, "you know all about that affair five years ago; how in-

fatuated and determined I was ; how nothing but sending me out of England with *you* saved me from committing moral and social suicide."

"Yes, yes," I say, impatiently;—for have not other men who had no friends by to save them since made shipwreck of *their* lives through ill-placed love, however nobly conceived? I think more men are ruined through their good impulses than their bad ones.

"And you will think," he goes on, "that as I got over that, so I should get over this, if she refuses to have me. But this is all different—love and honour go together, and she has grown into my very heart, and is ten thousand times more to me now than the day when, like a blundering idiot, I rushed at and asked her to marry me, as though she could find me as easy to love, as I had found her."

“And she said?”

“No—a hundred times, no—and it was then that I got a suspicion she liked a certain person, but I know now that I was mistaken.”

“Poor Anak!” I say, half aloud; “to think of his falling in love with her, too. What *is* there in the little witch to account for it?”

“She is *herself*,” says Siva, almost indignantly; “I never saw anyone a bit like her, and never expect to again. She is so sweet, and saucy, and lovely.”

“There, there,” I say, impatiently, for these lovers’ transports are not agreeable to me, and it has certainly never occurred to me till now that Green Sleeves could be “lovely.”

I look at her as she advances to meet her old partner in the Lancers, and discover that Siva is right; she *is* lovely.

Lovely, with the sweetness of a violet, the

purity of a lily, the grace and tenderness of a child, that one cannot look on without feeling the heart grow warmer and better for the joy it affords to us.

"You have great influence with her, Sieving," says Siva; won't you use it in my favour? It seems an unmanly sort of thing to ask; but my heart is so set on her that I feel I'd rather get her for my wife *unwillingly* than any other woman I ever knew with her whole heart."

"Would you? I don't think I could go so far as that. But I'll use any influence I may have with her on your behalf."

"You will!" cries the young fellow, "and at once? She seems better inclined towards me to-night than she has ever been before."

"Then make her better still," I say, drily, as Green Sleeves herself approaches; "and I will do my best for you to-morrow."



CHAPTER VI.

"Or does the wind blow in your glove?
Bowling down, bowling down;
Or runs your mind on another love!
And aye the birks are bowling.";



I left the ball at one, and for the remaining hour or so of night I have lain restlessly tossing to and fro on my bed, with the light wind that has got up without for company. Stirring the topmost boughs of the cherry-tree opposite my window, it sends across my coverlid (for the moon is high) wandering shapes and indistinct outlines of flickering

leaves with now and then a leap, a tongue, a quiver of light between.

As the fantastic dance ceased, and daylight, first faint, then strong and lusty as a young god, grew and filled the heavens with his power, I rose, and, dressing myself, passed noiselessly downward through the quiet breathings of the sleeping household.

But as I passed the door of Green Sleeves' study, that once forbidden me is now always open to me, obeying some odd impulse, I pushed the door open, and went in.

She must have been here not long since ; there are signs of her recent presence in the white kid-glove thrown down on the table, in the crimson rose placed in water that last night she wore at her breast, in—but what is this ?

A broad sheet of paper lies before me, its whiteness all disfigured by splashes, and stars, and odd blurred shapes . . . tears ?

She must have been here but a very little while ago, for the page is wet . . . O! Green Sleeves, what a tear was there! This one fell delicately, hope or memory touched thee, and thy heart slackened, then came a blinding rush that merged a hundred drops in one, and here I think thy head sunk down, and left this confused outline . . . It is a map traced by thy heart's agonies, and yet thou must have wept very silently, else, for I was waking, I must have heard thee.

The child's hurt is more incurable than I had thought . . . to come straight from the scene in which she had taken such delight, to weep alone for him thus; with every pulse set to the bounding joy and exhilaration of the moment, to turn aside, to *remember!* O! faithful heart . . . wretched as thou art, Ullathorne, one well might envy thee.

How can I talk to her of Siva with this

pitiful revelation of her inmost soul in my mind?

And even could I summon the courage, or by harshness persuade her, might I not be doing that which at some future day I should wish to Heaven I could undo?

Through the half-open drawer of the table, something in Green Sleeves' handwriting catches my eye. Before I am well conscious of the dishonour of the action, the drawer is open, and the manuscript of the child's novel is revealed; a second more, and it is in my hand.

It was only yesterday that I said to her, "Green Sleeves, I think I should like to read that novel of yours."

"It wants such a lot of alteration," she said, turning her head away, "and—and it's dreadful stuff, Mr. Dick, you would only laugh at it."

"I won't laugh—promise me that I shall read it some day?"

"Yes—some day," she said. "Mr. Dick?"

"Yes?"

"It's all *guessing*, you know."

"Of course." But I thought her disingenuous in this, as assuredly she had not dreamed only of love, but knew it.

And now the "Some day" has come, I hold the expression of her inmost soul in my hand; shall I surprise and make my own all the secret of this poor little heart?

I turn to the last page, and there, at the foot of the word *Finis*, a big tear lies as though it were a seal affixed to a portion of her life over and done with . . . can she have been all night striving to uproot her sinful love, and so make room for the new healthy one just trembling into life? If it be so, then God help thee in thy struggle,

Green Sleeves, and bring thee safe to land at last!

There is a sound of footsteps without, the door is pushed gently open; looking up, I see her standing in the doorway, pale, heavy-eyed, how different to the happy creature, who, but a short three hours ago, footed it so gaily at her first ball!

At sight of me, she starts back; then her glance falls on the papers still in my hand, and, in a second, she has snatched them from me, passionate anger scorching up the shame in her brown eyes. Alas! poor child, she thinks I have learned her secret from them!

“Green Sleeves,” I say, gently, “I have not read one word, for there is no need. I know the truth—I have known it all along.”

The manuscript falls with a crash to the floor. I dare not look at her, but I think her agony of shame is hidden by two little, trem-

bling hands. . . . I had as lief stab her tender body through and through as put her soul to such torture as this; but, when plain, bold speech, may, perchance, save her, shall I shrink from speaking?

“Green Sleeves,” I say, not looking at her, but, somehow, conscious that her face is to the wall, “how do you expect all this to end? What can come of it but misery and disappointment? I thought you too proud to seek to steal from another woman the allegiance that should be hers, too wise with a maiden’s pure and gentle wisdom to so lavish your heart’s treasures on one who can never make you return in kind——”

“Mr. Dick,” she cries, with a sort of desperate wonder, “this—this is not like you; but I understand . . . I will tear this love from my heart; I will die in the effort to conquer it, but you shall never see a sign of it again . . .

and I thought I had hidden it so well!" She breaks off suddenly in her speech, and, covering her face, writhes to and fro in a very paroxysm of anguished shame.

"Green Sleeves, little one," I say, drawing her towards me as when she was a child, and I sought to comfort her, "should it be so very hard a thing to you to conquer this love?"

"*Hard?*" she says, below her breath, her brown eyes for one moment looking into mine with so true, so terrible a faithfulness, as Death himself, methinks, might look on, and pass by. Then she is gone, and, with head averted, is standing by the open window.

"There is one person who loves you, Green Sleeves," I say, sadly, "who, but for this misplaced fancy of yours, might make you very happy, as it would have made me could you have loved him."

"It would have made you happy?" she says, not turning, but the whole slight figure expressing a breathless waiting that somehow startles me.

"Yes . . . the other is . . . such a pity."

"You *wish* it?"

"Yes."

What unacknowledged, hitherto unknown voice within me, even as I speak, cries urgently aloud, "*No?*"

There is a moment's silence, then a little brown head falls forward on the window-sill, and still there is silence—no one has ever heard a heart break.

"Child," I cry, "what can I say to you? I can give you no hope; there is that between you and your love that only death can set aside . . . and you are not capable of the baseness of so building your hopes. There is nothing for it but to over-

come this love, and so earn your own respect and mine."

"*Respect!*"

Did she utter the word, or is it but the echo in my ears of the last word of my own speech?

"Siva loves you," I go on; "he is honourable, faithful, honest. I think he would make you happy; and, some day, you would look back upon this madness in pity and in wonder, and smile, as you said, 'I was very young!'"

"And is not youth the best time to love, to be faithful, to be unselfish in?" she cries, half lifting her pale face. "I do not desire happiness, if to be happy is to be wise and successful! Not even to please you," she adds, and I can scarcely hear her, for her head has fallen again, "can I marry him."

"This is a poor home for you at the best,"

I say, looking round at the narrow room, the humble furniture, "and, for years and years you would have to live here just as it is; while Siva can give you a home worthy of you, and in which you could take delight."

"Mr. Dick," she cries, not looking round, "I know how it is—and—and Lady Hungerford was talking to me last night of how it was not right to *you* that I should throw away the chance, if anyone was so good as to love me, for that you were all out in the world, now, and dear old Pink May stayed on here only on my account . . . and I will not be a burden to you any longer, for I will go away, but I will not marry Lord Siva."

"Green Sleeves," I cry, starting up, "is that why you were all at once so ready to leave the ball, and spoke so little coming home?"

"Yes," she says, dully; "it had never struck me before what a *burden* I must be to you. I

was grateful with all my heart and soul to you, and I never forget that I have no right to bear the name of Sieviking, by which strangers address me; but, somehow, this little old house has always seemed to me your home, till you had regained the other, and—and I did not know I was in anyone's way."

"Green Sleeves," I say, sternly, "you know that it is not so—that we love you dearly, and that you are the very sunshine of the house: it is because you will not strive to pluck this sinful passion from your heart that you talk of leaving us."

"Sinful?" she echoes, with a kind of wonder in her voice. "O! you are going too far . . . I will not submit to it. Who was it that said, 'And if I love thee, what is that to thee?' and my love is like that—it is nothing to any one but me, it can hurt no one but me, and—and——"

She shivers through and through, as though her heart were turned to ice.

“If shame and degradation could kill love,” she goes on, “then mine would be *dead*. It must be a poor thing, and without pride, to be living yet, must it not?”

I cannot answer her; I know now that it would have been better that I had held my peace.

I have torn the veil from her shrinking heart to no purpose, save by the fires of pain to burn still deeper into it her unhappy love.

“I thought I had hidden it so well,” she says, with a sudden break in her miserable young voice. “I tried so hard . . . but now there is only one thing left to do, to go away for ever; and in time, perhaps, you will forget that I was ever so foolish.”

She has subsided into a heap on the ground.

Suddenly I cross the narrow room, and, kneeling beside her, seek to draw her hands away from the face that I have only seen for one moment during the whole interview.

"Do not touch me," she cries, even fiercely, "you have held me up to my own contempt, and now do you wish to *see* the extent of the bitter humiliation you have inflicted?"

"Child," I cry, "was it not for your good? Do you suppose it makes me happy to see you wretched?"

"I have been wretched for years and years," she says, "but, until now, I have never been *ashamed*. I—I think I would rather die than look you in the face again; and, please God," she adds, passionately, "I never will."

"What will you do, Green Sleeves?" I say, ceasing in my efforts to remove those screening fingers, and with something of that feeling of

cold, of *loss* at my heart that touched it when I knew we had lost Sieviking.

She shrinks away from me till her brows are against the wall, but answers not a word.

“Charolais,” I say, sternly, “is it thus that you take a remonstrance that none but your truest friend would have spoken? Should I have been doing my duty to let you go dreaming on——”

“I never dreamed, or hoped, or looked forward to anything,” she cries, desperately. “I was content to just *exist*—I was even proud of that which made life so beautiful to me; but now I could wish the heart would cease to beat from which I am not able at once to tear this despised love. And you will go away now, if you please, Mr. Dick.”

“No,” I say, resolutely, “I will not go away until you have promised me that you will let all be as though I had never spoken; that you

will not for one moment think of anything so mad as leaving us—for that is what is in your thoughts at this moment.”

She only presses her head lower against the wall, her whole attitude expressing a strong disgust that arouses my wonder and disapproval. After all, is she one of those women to whom one dare not speak the truth when it is unpalatable? I had thought her very different.

“Charolais, is it possible to run away from one’s own heart? Others are unhappy too, and they have to bear their troubles as best they may—for they cannot be overcome, like yours, by an effort of will.”

She turns slightly, but in another moment shrinks back into her former position.

“And so, since we are both so wretched, shall we not try to bear with and solace one another, not quarrel, child?”

"No," she says, dully ; "the house would be a prison to me—I could not breathe in it—we can be friends still, Mr. Dick . . . at a distance, but I must go."

"You shall not go," I say, quietly ; "you shall never leave the shelter of my roof till you go to that of a husband's, so make up your mind to that—for wherever you go, I will find and fetch you back again."

"O!" she cries, passionately ; "you will make me *hate* you . . . why should I not stay ? for the cure is more than half complete, already . . . and now, if you have one instinct of manliness, one trace of resemblance to the Mr. Dick that I used to know, *leave me!*"

"You will not drive me from you by taunts," I say ; "and I will not leave you, I swear it, Green Sleeves, till you have promised me that you will not go away from here till I give you leave."

"That is the last, the manliest stroke of all," she says, faintly ; "I am in your power ; I am bound to you by a hundred ties of gratitude——"

"And in payment of them," I say, calmly, "I demand this promise—after that you owe me nothing ; we are quits."

As one who has arrived at the very end of her strength, she gasps out the words,—

"I promise." . . . then, as I linger a moment, she lifts her hand, and points to the door.


"Go!"

As I close it behind me, I hear her drag herself towards it, and turn the key. And then there is silence—for hours and hours there is silence, and my heart grows harder and more bitter against Ullathorne.



CHAPTER VII.

"Nor blows the wind within my glove,
Bowing down, bowing down;
Nor runs my mind on another love,
And aye the birks are bowing."

T mid-day, there comes a timid knock
at my door. I can scarcely control
my voice to say, "Come in," I
do not lift my eyes, as a little
figure crosses the threshold, and
comes to my side; but Green Sleeves does not
smell of lavender, there is never more than
the breath of a wild flower, or the scent of a
rose about her, and without looking up, I
become aware that my visitor is Pink May.

"Lord Siva is here," she says; "but, of course, he thinks you are at hospital, and I did not say you were in, as I know you hate to be disturbed."

"Well?"

"He wants to see Charolais; but she won't come down, or even open her door, and there is the poor young man waiting in the parlour. So lucky, dear, that I had just dressed myself for the day!"

"Can't you make him transfer his attentions to *you*, aunt?" I say, wearily. "Tell him to come to me here."

"Why, who would have thought of finding you at home at this hour?" cries Siva, as he enters. "Old fellow," he adds, as he closes the door, "you'll think me hasty and premature, coming here to-day, but I couldn't wait; she was so kind, so different to what she usually is to me, last night, that I feel *now* is

the time to once more put my fortune to the touch."

How bright he looks, how eager . . . how full of the gifts of fortune is the hand that would take my little Green Sleeves, and hold her in its safe keeping till her life's end . . . and I can speak to him no word of hope; that one look she gave me when she said, "*Hard?*" seems burnt in upon my eyes; nor Siva, nor any other, could teach that fierce faithfulness to forget, or unroll to those beautiful eyes a more profound love than that which they have already known.

"Siva," I say, looking up, and seeming to see suddenly reflected in his bright face my own haggard looks, "you could not have come at a worse time. I spoke to her this morning, and this—man, as yet holds complete possession of her heart."

He stares at me for a moment, the gladness

dying suddenly out; then, seizing my arm, cries,—

“Sieviking, *who is it?*”

“That is for her,” I say, “not us.”

His eyes search mine, but do not find in them “Ullathorne.”

“And there is *no* hope?” he says, bitterly.

“Some day there may be; but, I’ve a notion, Siva, that she’s that rare thing among women—faithful.”

“She seemed so happy with me last night,” he says, walking to the window, and looking abroad; “did not care to dance with anyone, to be with anyone, but me, and all the while, she was kind to me only as a *friend*. Well, if she can be faithful, so can I. So help me, God, if I cannot get Charolais to be my wife, I will never marry living woman. Sieviking, am I personally displeasing to her? did she say *why* she could not love me?”

"It is not you; it is that her heart is so full of someone else, that there is not room for even a fancy to creep in. This unhappy, hopeless love——"

"Hopeless?" he cries, quickly.

"Utterly; it can end in nothing."

"Then I have a chance, yet," he cries, throwing up his arms. "Sieviking, has it ever struck you that the persons who are pointed out to us as models of constancy, are thus admirable only because they have not been pressed hard enough, or by the right person, to forget? I don't believe in a woman feeding on a still-born love for ever, when a warm, loving one is close at hand, and waiting her acceptance. I will wait, and, please God, win my little sweetheart in spite of all, at last."

"And you could bear that?" I say, looking at him, curiously, "to take this poor, second

love that has become your own only because another man could not, or would not receive it?"

"The second love is the best," he says. "I would welcome from her *any* love that she pleased to give me."

"Then you are not like me; I would take none but the first—and last."

"No," he says, as he takes up his hat to go, "I am not like you; I never knew anyone that was. I shall not come here again, but—I shall wait."

Long after he has gone, I sit at my table, all my heart and thoughts with that little, lonely figure above stairs.

The sun has left the cherry-tree in shadow when sounds of a commotion, strictly feminine, and on a large scale, penetrate to my sanctum; they even approach my door, which presently flying open, admits not one woman, or even two, or three, but *five*.

Bell leads the van, sweeping a small son along in her skirts with as irresistible an impulse as a leaf driven of the wind. Cynthia follows, stepping delicately, her train thrown over her arm, Hetty at her heels, Jill, with a twin on one arm, bringing up the rear, while Pink May is dimly visible beyond. Bell makes for the only easy chair the room contains, and, sinking into it, melts slowly and by almost imperceptible gradations into tears.

"What is the matter?" I cry, really alarmed; "is Sir Peter dead, or ruined—or—or have you got another baby? But that's impossible," I add, hastily, "for you danced at your own ball last night."

"No," says Bell, "though I think I might almost sacrifice myself to the extent of *that*, rather than see such a chance flung away."

"What does it all mean?" I say, bewildered, and looking round at the harem into which

my room has suddenly been transformed, every available perch being occupied by a young woman, while Pink May finds a seat on a round coal-box just inside the door, and I'm much mistaken if Ariel does not lend a willing ear to the key-hole without.

"You are a baby, yourself," cries Bell, indignantly; "why don't you use your influence with that child to prevent her being such an utter insensate idiot as to refuse Lord Siva?"

"So *that* is what you are looking such a picture of misery about?" I say, smiling, in spite of myself; "now what possible difference can it make to you whether she does or does not marry Siva?"

"It shall never be said of me that I stood by and saw two people *ruin* themselves for want of a word in season," says Bell, drying her eyes; "as nobody else seems inclined to speak out, I must."

"Don't," I say, abruptly ; "unsought advice never did any good yet. You can urge nothing on her in his favour that I have not already done—uselessly."

"*You* have urged her to marry Siva?" exclaims Bell, in a tone of relief, while Jill, who is nearest to me, looks up suddenly.

"Yes—with all my heart."

"I told you so, Bell," says Cynthia, languidly ; "and that you needn't be at all uneasy."

"Then, why is she refusing Siva?" persists Bell ; "if she is in love with somebody else, it doesn't make it a bit better that somebody else isn't in love with her—she must be *made* to give over such folly, and accept him!"

I look across at Hetty, in sudden fear. Has she found out thus late in the day her husband's secret ?

But her beautiful face is vacant of the

slightest concern as she smiles down on Jill's little twin, who had seized one of her ribbons in its tiny fist, and in all good faith proceeds to eat it.

"I don't think she wants to marry anybody," says Pink May, shaking her curls gravely; "and indeed when I was a young girl the idea of marriage was abhorrent to me."

"She shall not be argued or forced into anything," I say, quietly; "if in time she can overcome her objection to Siva, well and good; if not, there will always be a home for her here."

"And have you thought of what your future wife may say to such an arrangement?" says Bell, curiously.

"I shall never marry."

"So every man says till he meets the right, or wrong woman—and it's my firm belief that you'll marry the *wrong* one."

"Bell has got a ridiculous idea," says Cynthia (who was born without tact, but by the force of circumstances has never had occasion to require any), "that Charolais is in love with *you*—and she certainly is far prettier than Florizel, you know."

"So *that* is why you are so anxious for her to marry Siva?" I say. "Well, make your mind easy on that score, Bell, and leave us in peace. You did quite enough mischief when you spoke to her last night—you made her feel her dependence as she has never felt it before."

"She deserved to," cries Bell. "When I *dragged* from her that Siva had already proposed, and that she had refused him, I grew warm, I must confess it; for how often, now-a-days, does a penniless girl, without a relative, get such a chance as that? Why, I myself, in the Trevelyan days, would not have despised

a well-to-do rector—it was a stroke of pure good luck that sent Sir Peter to the vicarage garden party to quiz the rustics, though it was my own address that made him find himself the *quizzed* ; and after that, Cynthia and Hetty married well, as a matter of course, and Jill might have, too, if she had had any sense, and in that case would never have disgraced herself with twins—but where was I?”

Where, indeed ? But Cynthia, with admirable common sense, supplies the cue.

“Charolais’s luck—without any relatives, you know.”

“*Yes.* He began raving about her to me after she had gone last night ; and, of course, I got the whole business out of him in two minutes, and I put it to him, would he not have *preferred* her having a father—or even a mother ? He said he should come and ask her again this morning, and I had given her

such a sound talking to, that I felt nearly certain she would say 'Yes.'"

"So did I," says Cynthia, yawning. "It seems odd for a girl in her position, but she is positively—proud."

"I worked myself into quite a fever over it," continues Bell, "and as Cynthia and Hetty were lunching with me, I thought we'd come together and hear the upshot of the interview, and on the way picked up Jill, so that we might *all* talk to her if she was obstinate."

Alas! poor Green Sleeves! As I look at the four blooming young matrons before me, and think of them sitting in council upon her, I cannot forbear a smile.

"*You* would not be hard on her, would you, old girl?" I say, patting my dear Jill's hand.

"And what do I find?" says Bell, in such deep tones of tragedy as causes her small son

to cling to her in amazement. "Charolais locked in her room—Siva been and gone—she even refusing to see him! I wonder the roof does not fall in on her."

"There, there," I say, wearily, "it is no such great thing, after all; leave the child alone, Bell, perhaps time may set matters straight."

"Time!" she echoes, indignantly. "Meanwhile, Dick, I have some news for *you*."

"Well?"

"The old Earl is dead, and Florizel is free."

I am not able to hide the sudden change that comes over my face—her news has leaped out upon, and taken me unawares.

"When did you hear it?"

"This morning."

Their faces grow dim to me . . . then disappear altogether . . . how shall I bear to see her, to rip up the terrible past; just, too, as I was

gathering some peace of mind—even, at intervals, learning to *forget* . . .

“And she does not like Charolais,” says Cynthia, her phlegmatic voice seeming to sound from a long way off. “The last time she wrote to me she said, ‘Is that child whom Dick used to be so fond of *married* yet?’”

“H’m,” says Bell, watching me intently, “you’re not in love with Florizel; you and she are perfectly good friends, but never mean to marry; nevertheless, you can’t hear her name mentioned without changing countenance. By-the-bye, do you intend to receive her, when she comes, in this *hovel*?”

“Ladies don’t usually visit men in their own houses.”

“She will come to see aunt,” says Bell, drily. “Why not move into a better house? You can afford it now, as I hear you have given up that ridiculous idea of buying back

Sieviking ; but perhaps it will be better to wait till you settle down for good."

"I have asked Florizel to come to me for the present," says Hetty, as they all stand up to go, the dull room looking as if a rainbow had got in, and then broken itself into bits. "She has no near relations, you know. I will tell you as soon as she has arrived."

"Don't come to the door with us," says Bell, as she stands on tiptoe to kiss me. "I was in such a hurry to tell you about the old Earl, and to find out what luck Siva had had, that I came down in my own carriage. But if you don't come up the servants will never guess it's *you* who live here. Really this visit has quite relieved me. Ta-ta."

When they have all gone, my head falls forward on the table, my nails dug into my palms, in one of those fierce paroxysms of self-contempt in which the spirit loathes its

dwelling-place, and would cast it off had Will the power to do it.

It is not our own wrong-doing, or that of others, that kills . . . it is the shame of our own contempt that sinks the godhead in the worm, and causes us to writhe in the dust.

"Dick," cries Jill's voice in terror ; " Dick, what is it ? O! my poor boy, are you suffering as well as she ?"

"*She*?" I cry, fiercely. "O! never fear that *she* will suffer. What am I saying?" I dash my hand across my brow and look wildly around.

"But she does, Dick, terribly——"

"What do you know of it?" I cry, staring at her. "What is she to you? You are mad, Jill, mad——"

"Dick," she says, shrinking a little away from me, "I think I understand . . . but if

you love her, and she loves you, what is there to hinder you being happy together?"

"*Love?*" I stare at her with such hatred and loathing in my eyes as makes her cry out and put up her hands before her own.

"What has she done to you that you should look like that?" she says, fearfully.

"Done? O! my God! Is it nothing to have coiled round and choked the life out of all that is good in a man—to have slain all lofty ideals, all pure hopes in him—to have sapped his energy with poisonous sweetness; but last, and worst of all, to have shattered his self-respect, and rendered him unfit in his own eyes to do work for either God or man?"

"And has she done all this?" says Jill, trembling—"our little Charolais, who has made our home so happy, and whom we have all loved so dearly?"

"Charolais?" I repeat, staring at her. "Who spoke of her? Ah! I remember—we were talking of her just now. Bell was angry because she would not marry Siva. And she locked herself into her room; she must be hungry and faint by now, poor little soul."

"Dick," says Jill, approaching me, timidly, as one in fear, and drawing my head down to her breast, "won't you tell her all about it, your faithful Jill, who loves you dearly?"

For a moment my head lies on that pure haven, then the thought of where *last* it rested suddenly stings me through and through, and I tear it away. "There—go," I say, kissing her pale lips, "no one, not even you, can help me."

END OF VOL. II.

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